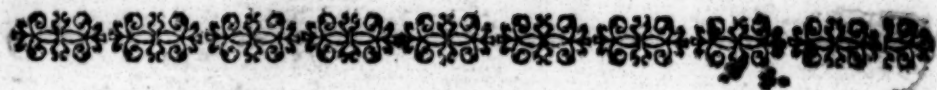


1/2 Nov



THE.

Dissenting Gentleman's

A N S W E R

TO

Mr. *White's*

Three L E T T E R S, &c.



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THE
Dissenting Gentleman's
ANSWER

To the Reverend

Mr. *WHITE*'s
THREE LETTERS;

In which

A SEPARATION from the Establishment
is fully justified ;

The Charge of SCHISM is refuted and retorted ;

AND THE

CHURCH of *England* and the CHURCH of JESUS CHRIST, are
impartially compared, and found to be CONSTITUTIONS of a
quite DIFFERENT NATURE.

*We desire to hear thee—for as concerning THIS SECT, we know that
every where it is spoken against. ACTS xxviii. 22.*

The FIFTH EDITION.

BOSTON, N. E. Printed and sold by ROGERS and FOWLE in
Queen-street. 1748.

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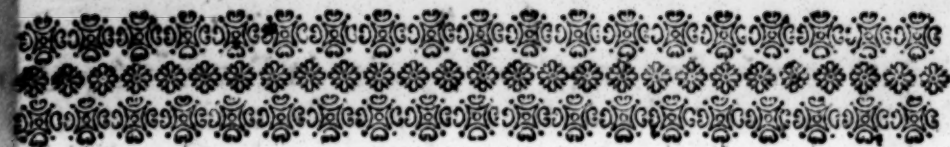
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T H E
DISSENTING GENTLEMAN'S
A N S W E R

To the R E V E R E N D

Mr. *WHITE*'s Three L E T T E R S, &c.

S I R,

A DEBATE of this kind I should not have *chose* in the present Situation of our publick Affairs : But as you have done me the Honour of publickly addressing to me *three* long Letters for my Conviction and Edification, Gratitude and good Manners *constrain* me to answer.

As *worldly* Considerations are very strong on your Side, I assure you, I have an Ear *always open* to any thing that can shew Conformity to be my Duty. *Dissenters* are not Men of so peculiar a Turn of Mind, as to love Suffering and Reproach, or to despise the Dignities, Preferments, and lucrative Posts, to the Amount of *Millions* a Year, which are shared amongst their Fellow-subjects, could they with a good Conscience partake of them, as they have a *natural Right* to do.

But,

But, notwithstanding this Prejudice in Favour of your Argument, and all the Ingenuity with which you set it off, I cannot say it has wrought in me the Conviction you seemed to hope. So far, Sir, from this, that the more carefully I examine the Grounds of my *Separation*, the more thoroughly I am convinced of its Lawfulness and Expediency; that 'tis a *Debt* I owe to God, to *Liberty*, to *Truth*, and an Act of Homage and Allegiance due to CHRIST, the *only* Law-giver and King in the Church.

I shall not enter upon the Enquiry, on which you largely expatiate, who are the *best Livers*, Churchmen or Dissenters? And amongst which the best Means for *holy living* are found? Let the World judge betwixt us. Would to God that both of us had greater Reason to boast!

The Controversy betwixt us, Sir, I apprehend may easily be brought to a *plain* and *short* Issue, if you will heartily join in it. It turns upon the *single Point* of the XXth Article of your Church, viz. *That THE CHURCH hath Power to decree Rites and Ceremonies, and Authority in Matters of Faith.* For if THE CHURCH hath *really* this Authority and Power, then all Objections of the Dissenters about Sponsors, the Cross in Baptism, kneeling at the Lord's Supper, and every other Thing, are impertinent and vain: *The Church* having this Authority ought reverently to be obeyed. And, if instead of two or three Ceremonies, it had enjoined two or three Score; and if to the *Thirty-nine Articles* it had added an hundred besides, we ought meekly to have bowed down to her *spiritual Jurisdiction*, and to have practised and believed as *the Church* had taught and enjoined.

But, if on the Contrary, Sir, *the Church* hath *really* and in Truth, *no Power at all*, nor *Authority* of this kind; yea, if CHRIST, the great *Law-giver* and *King* of the Church, hath expressly commanded that *no Power* of this kind shall ever be *claimed*, or ever be *yielded*, by any of his Followers; then *your Church* is reprehensible

and highly criminal before God, for usurping *this Power*: And then the *Dissenters* are justified, and will have Honour before God, for entering their Protest against such *Usurpation*; for asserting the Rights and Privileges of the Christian Church; and *standing fast in the Liberty wherewith CHRIST has made them free.*

Our Separation from the Establishment you are pleased to represent in very terrifying and black Colours, as a Sin of near the first Magnitude ---- “ Our Ministers, you say, have Guilt lying heavily upon them on Account of their schismatical and uncatholick Proceedings.----They are notoriously peccant (*i. e.* are great Sinners) in throwing off the Authority of those whom they ought to obey and submit themselves to.---- Their Conduct is such as you challenge all the Wit and Ingenuity of the Nation ever to reconcile with *holy Living* ---- You represent them as carnal, evil, and deceitful Workers, disorderly Walkers, whom God will, undoubtedly, for these Things bring into Judgment *; and the Faithful, far from being permitted to enter into any *pastoral Relation* to them, are not permitted to have any *Christian Communion* with them; no, not so much as any *intimate unnecessary Acquaintance and Familiarity* with them in common Life †; with much more to the same Purpose. You speak also “ of the *Lay-dissenter*, as having stained his Soul with Guilt ‡; and of the Doctrine on which our Separation is built, as being *false and dangerous* §. This you wish me to lay to Heart, and seriously to consider.”

I have, according to your Wish, Sir, *lain it to Heart, and seriously considered.* The Result of my Consideration I shall now freely give you; and in return heartily wish, that laying aside all Prejudice and *worldly Attach-*

* Letter I. Page 82, 83.

† Letter II. Page 8.

‡ Letter II. Page 26.

§ Letter III. Page 59.

ments, you would impartially consider ---- What is the true Nature and Constitution of the *Christian Church*; and what the Allegiance, which, as a Subject of JESUS CHRIST, you owe to HIM the *only* Law-giver and King in the Church; who will shortly call you to Account for your Conduct in this Respect.

To come then to the Point ---- THE CHURCH you say, and solemnly subscribe it, *hath Power to decree Rites, and Authority in Matters of Faith*. This is the grand Hinge upon which the whole Controversy turns. Now here, Sir, let me ask you,

FIRST, *What CHURCH* is it, to whom this Authority and Power is given? You will, doubtless, say, the *Church of England*; for the *Church of England* expressly claims and exercises this Power; and you *avow* and *defend* it in this Exercise and Claim: Yea, this is the *very Basis* on which its whole Frame and Hierarchy stands. It obliges all its Ministers to subscribe to *Articles of Faith*, which it hath *authoritatively* decreed; and to use in religious Worship *Ceremonies* and *Rites*, which it hath *authoritatively* enjoined.

But mind, Sir, I beseech you, the Consequences of this Claim. If the *Church of England* hath really this Authority and Power, hath not the *Church of France* ---- the *Church of Spain* ---- the *Church of Rome*, the very same? Hath *England*, in this Matter, any Privilege from God, any spiritual Prerogative, any Character from Heaven, which its *neighbour Countries* have not? You will not pretend it has. But if it has no Privilege nor Prerogative of this kind, then the *Church of France*, and the *Church of Rome* have also, you acknowledge, POWER to decree *Rites* and *Ceremonies* in GOD'S *Worship*, and AUTHORITY in *Points of Faith*; consequently, all the Poperies and Superstitions of the *Romish Church*, at least, which cannot be proved to be contrary to the Word of GOD, are to be reverently submitted to by all the Members of the Church, and cordially received.

But

But will not your claiming this Power for the *Church*, absolutely overthrow the *Reformation* itself, and subvert the *very Foundation* of the Church you seek to establish? For till you can shew, why the *Church of England* is possessed of this Power, but not the *Church of Rome*; why a Body of acknowledged fallible Men in *Britain* have Authority to make and to enjoin Articles of Faith, but not a Body of pretended infallible Men at *Trent*; whence *ENGLAND* came thus spiritually-gifted, and endowed beyond all its *neighbour Kingdoms* ---- your Separation from the *Church of Rome* is incapable of a just and solid Defence.

To this, perhaps, you will reply ---- But our *Church* hath expressly guarded against any such *Abuse* of the Power it claims, by adding in the XXth Article ---- *Tet is it not lawful for the Church to ordain any Thing that is contrary to GOD's Word written; neither may it so expound one Place of Scripture that it be repugnant to another.* But, upon this, I entreat your Patience for these two Remarks:

1st, Whatever Ceremony or Rite then cannot be shewn to be CONTRARY to GOD's *Word*, your Church, yea, the *Church of Rome* hath, you acknowledge, full Authority to enjoin: Consequently, as your Church, by Virtue of this Authority, hath enjoined the *Cross in Baptism*, it hath full Power also to require you to *cross yourselves*, whenever you enter the Place of Worship, say your Prayers, look towards the East, touch the Bible, sit at Meat ---- It hath full Power to enjoin the Use of Salt and Spittle in *Baptism*, *Chrism*, *extreme Unction*, and an hundred other Things which are no more contrary to GOD's *Word* than the *Cross in Baptism* is.

As your Church now consecrates Ground, it has every whit as much Power to consecrate the other Element, and to make *holy Water*, as well as *holy Earth*; and to order it to be decently sprinkled upon its Members (*for all Things, you know, are to be done decently and in Order*) in Token that they shall keep themselves pure from

Sin : It hath *Power* to consecrate *holy Knives* to cut the sacramental Bread ; *holy Basins* and *Ewers* for the Priests to wash in before the Sacrament, *holy Vestments* and *Robes*, and a great Variety of *holy Utensils*, lighted *Tapers* for the Altar, &c. (all which, you know, Sir, was done by your admired Bishop *Laud*) knocking on the Breast, bowing towards the East, Prostration before the Altar.--- All these, I say, and innumerable other Ceremonies your Church claims *Authority* and *Power* to enjoin ; for none of these can be shewn to be more *contrary to the Word of God*, or to be a whit more superstitious, ridiculous, or absurd, than the *crossing* at Baptism, or the *solemn Consecration* of Churches and their Yards. But,

2dly. The *Limitation* or *Guard*, which the Article seems to put upon *this Power* of the Church, is really of no Force, and amounts to nothing at all.

For tho' it says ---- That the Church *may not ordain any Thing* CONTRARY to GOD'S *Word*, nor so *expound one Scripture* as to be REPUGNANT to another : Yet of this *Repugnance* and *Contraiety*, the CHURCH alone, you will observe, and not every *private Person*, is allowed to be the proper *Judge* : For else the Article is absurd ; it actually overthrows itself ; and takes away, with one Hand, what it gives with the other. For, if every *private Person* hath *Authority* to judge of the Church's Decisions, and to *reject* them, if they appear to him repugnant to Scripture ; then the *Church's Authority* in Points of Faith comes to just nothing at all. It is an Authority to decree, where none are bound to submit ; that is, an Authority over no Body, an Authority to do nothing. But such a senseless, unmeaning, impertinent Claim, can never be the Design and Import of *this Article*. It does claim therefore for the Church some *real Authority* to settle Points of Faith ; consequently, to Points thus *authoritatively* settled by it, private Christians, its Members are, reverently to submit, even tho' to their own Judgments they appear repugnant to the Word of God. This

This, Sir, must be the real Meaning and Intent of the Article, notwithstanding the *restrictive Clause*. Accordingly, in Consequence of this Claim, your Church have *authoritatively* decreed *Thirty-nine* Articles of Faith; and these it declares to have decreed *for the taking away Difference of Opinion, and to establish an Agreement in true Religion* *. The plain Language of *Authority*. These Articles it obliges all its Ministers to subscribe; and our *Princes*, as Heads and Governors of the *Church*, have *authoritatively* forbid its Clergy to preach any Thing repugnant to them, and required them to frame their Sermons according to *the Plan* here prescribed. From all which it appears, that, notwithstanding the *pretended Limitation*, there is a *real Authority* claimed by the Church, that is to say, by its *Governors*, to settle Points of Faith. But if there be *such Authority* really vested in them, then the People are bound to *submit* to their Decisions, and have no Right of private Judgment to *examine* or *reject* them; for there cannot be *two* CONTRADICTORY Rights; a *Right* in Governors to prescribe, and a *Right* in Subjects to refuse. ---- But if the *Church of England* has really this Authority and Right, the *Church of Rome* had it before her; and, as the elder and *Mother-church*, ought to have been obeyed. The *Reformation*, therefore, as we are wont to call it, was a Rebellion against Superiors, a Disobedience to the Authority vested in *the Church*, and ought, as such, as be renounced by returning to the *Church of Rome*.

In this Manner, Sir, a *Romish Priest* will turn upon the *Church of England* its own dangerous Artillery; and by the mere Concessions of this XXth Article, thousands of Profelytes have, no doubt, been gained from you. Nor, with all your Ingenuity, would you find it easy to ward off the Force of such Arguing, should any of your Parishioners be likely to be seduced. And this,

* *Preface to XXXIX Articles.*

perhaps, is the Reason why the numerous Converts these Priests are said to make, are gathered *all* from *your Church*; whereas, from amongst the *Dissenters*, you hardly ever hear of one gained. But,

SECONDLY. I want much to be enlightened as to THE PERSONS who are invested with *this Authority and Power*.

You say, it is *the Church*: But *Who*, I pray, are *the Church*, in whom this great *Power* is lodged? You will please to observe well, Sir, not the *Bishops and Clergy*, who are wont to speak of themselves as our *spiritual Pastors and Guides*, as being *over us in the Lord*, as *Stewards of the Mysteries*, &c. This *Power* to order the Manner of God's Worship, and to settle Articles of Faith, is *not* at all lodged in *them*, but entirely in the KING and PARLIAMENT of these Realms.

You need not be informed, Sir, that *all the Clergy* of this Kingdom, with *all the Bishops* at their Head, have not the least *Authority* to enjoin one Ceremony or Rite of Worship; or to either *establish* or *annul* one Article of Faith. No, but *all Power and Jurisdiction* relating to these Matters is lodged chiefly in *Lay-hands*; 'tis solely in the KING and PARLIAMENT, and *the Clergy* are to act in all Things under *their* Direction and Controul. The *King and Parliament* are in Truth the real *Fathers, Governors, or Bishops* of this Church: *These ONLY* have Power to make or to unmake Forms and Rites of Worship, and do *authoritatively* instruct and prescribe to *the Clergy* what they are to believe ---- in what Manner, and to whom the Sacraments are to be given ---- what Prayers they are to offer up ---- what Doctrine to preach ---- who are to be admitted to the *Episcopate* or *Priesthood*, and who to be refused ---- by what Ceremonies, Prayers, and Exhortations they are to be set apart, and consecrated to their Office ---- These, with every other Circumstance relating to Religion and the Worship of God, which is *authoritatively* prescribed or enjoined in *your Church*, you know, Sir, not the *Bishops* and

and *Clergy*, but the KING with *his Parliament*, are the ONLY *Persons* who have *authoritatively* enjoined and prescribed them.

“ The *Clergy* of the whole Land, in Convocation assembled, cannot so much as attempt any Canons or Constitutions without the King’s Licence. If the King and *Clergy* make a Canon, tho’ it binds the *Clergy in re ecclesiastica*, yet it does not bind Laymen §.”

Yea, so far, Sir, were the *Bishops* and *Clergy* from having any Hand in the first forming our present established Church, or in ordering its Rites and Articles of Faith, that it was done not only *without*, but in *actual Opposition* to them: “ For in the 1st of Q. *Eliz.* the *Parliament alone* established the Queen’s Supremacy and the Common-prayer-book, in spite of all Opposition from the *Bishops* in the House of Lords; and the *Convocation* then sitting, were so far from having any Hand in those Church-acts for Reformation, that they presented to the Parliament several Propositions in Behalf of the Tenets of *Popery*, directly contrary to the Proceedings of the Parliament *.” ----

Hence then, Sir, I think you must be absolutely forced to own (what I know Gentlemen of your Robe don’t care to hear) *viz.* That the *Church of England* is really a PARLIAMENTARY Church; that it is not properly an *Ally*,

§ Vide *Examination of the Codex*, &c. Pag. 114, 148. “ By the 25th of Hen. VIII. Cap. 19. it is a *Præmunire* for the Convocation to meet without the King’s Writ: And when they are met, to do any thing without the King’s Licence: And then no Resolution of theirs to have the Force of a Canon, unless the King confirm it. Nor is it then valid, if it be contrariant or repugnant to the Laws, Statutes, and Customs of this Realm, or be to the Damage or Hurt of the King’s Prerogative royal---- And of this the Courts of Westminster-Hall must judge ---- Hale, in his *Analysis* (Page 12.) says, If ecclesiastical Laws are not confirmed by Parliament, the King may revoke and annuel them at his Will and Pleasure.” ---- Vide Notes on an Answer to the Examination of the Bishop of London’s Codex.

* Vide *Priestcraft in Perfection*, Pref. Page 4.

but

but a mere *Creature* of the State. -- It depends entirely upon the *Acts* and *Authority* of PARLIAMENT for its very *Essence* and *Frame*. The *Qualifications* of its *Ministers*, their *Power* to officiate, the *Manner* in which they are to administer the *Sacraments*, are all limited and prescribed by *Authority of Parliament*, and this *Authority*, which at first made, can *alone* alter and new make it ; can abolish, or add to its *Articles* or *Rites*, according to its *Pleasure*, even tho' the whole *Body of Bishops* and *Clergy* ever so much dislike, or protest earnestly against it.

It is a Point therefore *incontestible*, and absolutely out of Doubt, that THE CHURCH, your Article declares to have *this Authority* and *Power* here, is the KING and PARLIAMENT of these Realms ; and it is *no other* than they. But,

THIRDLY. The grand Point which yet sticks, and which, without your Assistance, I shall never get over, is, how came the *civil Magistrate* by this *Authority* in the Church of CHRIST ? Who gave him this *Power* to decree *Rites* in Christian Worship, which *Christ* never decreed ; and to make *Articles* of Faith which *Christ* never made ? Neither CHRIST, nor the *Apostles*, ever gave him this *Authority* ; whence then is it derived ?

The *Subjection to higher Powers*, and *Obedience to Magistrates*, which the *Scriptures* enjoin *Christians*, relates only to *civil*, not at all to *religious* Matters : For this obvious Reason ; that the *Magistrate* at that Time was every where *Pagan*. The *Apostles* therefore instead of paying, or exhorting *Christians* to pay, any *Subjection* to him in *religious Affairs*, strenuously exhorted them to renounce and disavow it ---- to come out from among them, and be separate. They were every where, you know, Sir, *Dissenters* from the *established Church*.

CHRISTIANITY is so far from enjoining, that it actually forbids, *Obedience to civil Governors* in Things of a *religious Nature* : It commands us to call no Man upon Earth

Earth Father or Master §, i. e. to acknowledge no Authority or Jurisdiction of *any* in Matters of Religion, but to remember that *ONE, one only is our Master and Law-giver, even CHRIST*; and all Christians are *Brethren*; i. e. stand upon an equal Foot, having no Dominion over one another. 'Tho' *the Princes of the Gentiles exercise Dominion over them, and they who are Great exercise Authority upon them, yet it shall not*, our LORD says, *be so amongst you* †. Nay, but your Church replies, in this its XXth Article, *it shall be so amongst us*.--- There are some who have *Authority over others* in Matters of Faith--- There are *other Masters* besides CHRIST. Thus the *Article* and the *Scripture* manifestly clash: Will you be so good, Sir, as to adjust the Controversy betwixt them, and tell me which I am to follow.

The Church is CHRIST's Kingdom, *a Kingdom not of this World*: For his voluntary Humiliation and Suffering of Death, he is advanced to the high Honour of being *sole Law-giver, Judge and Sovereign* in religious Matters----- *He* only hath Authority to fix the *Terms of Communion* for his Followers or Church; and the *Terms* which *He* hath fix'd, no Man upon Earth, nor Body of Men, have Authority to set aside, to alter or new make. And if any Man upon Earth shall presume to alter, or new make, *Terms of Communion* in his Church; they are guilty of great Arrogance, and invade his Authority and Throne. But this, we apprehend, is what *you* have done. You will not now receive a Person to publick Baptism or the Lord's-Supper upon *the Terms* on which CHRIST and *his Apostles* would have received him. Neither CHRIST nor *his Apostles* ever made the *Sign of the Cross*, or *other Sponsors* besides the Parents, necessary to a Child's Baptism; nor did they ever make *kneeling* a necessary Term of receiving the Sacramental-Supper; but both those *you* make

§ Matt. xxiii. 8, 9.

† Matt. xx. 25.

necessary.

necessary *. Thus you have taken upon you to *new model* the Church of CHRIST, to change and set aside *his* Laws, and make *others* in their Room.

Now give me leave to ask you, Sir, by what Authority do you presume to reject those from *your* Church, whom in your Conscience you believe CHRIST and *his Apostles* would have received into theirs? Are *you* wiser than *they*? Or is *your* Church better framed, and more perfect than *theirs*? If an honest and sincere Christian now brings his Child to you to be publicly baptized, desiring it may be done *without* the Sign of the Cross, and that *himself* may stand forth as *Surety* for its Education; would you not refuse *him*? Or if he desired to be admitted to the Communion of Christians, in the other Sacrament of the Supper, but that he might not take it *Kneeling*: Would you not *reject* him? But if the same Person had come to JESUS CHRIST or the *Apostles*, offering himself and Child upon the *same Terms*, would they not have *received* him? But how is it, Sir, that you take upon you to *reject* from CHRIST's Family and Church, those whom you believe HIMSELF would have *received*? Is not this *Lording it over* GOD's Heritage, and usurping CHRIST's Throne? Is it not setting yourselves up for *Law-Makers* and *Rulers* in his Kingdom; claiming Homage from *his* Subjects? And are not his *faithful* Subjects, by the Allegiance they owe HIM, obliged to enter their Protest against such Usurpation, and to *stand fast in the Liberty wherewith CHRIST has set them free*?

Where then, let me appeal to your own sober Judgment, does the *Guilt of Schism* lie: Upon *you* or upon *us*? Upon *us*, who offer our selves to *Communion* in your

* The XXVIIth Canon requires, the Minister never wittingly to administer the Communion to any, but to such as kneel. The XXIXth Canon requires, that no Parent shall be urged to be present at his Child's Baptism; nor be admitted to answer as Godfather for his own Child.

Church upon *the Terms* which CHRIST appointed, and are ready to do *every Thing* which CHRIST has commanded: Or upon you who absolutely *reject us*, unless, besides what CHRIST hath order'd, we will submit also to some Orders and Devices of *your own*? We come as the *Lord's Servants*, and desire to eat at the *Lord's-Table*, with reverent Submission to all *his Appointments*. Nay but, say you, you shall not come to the *Lord's-Table*, unless you will *kneel*; *i. e.* unless you will come in that Posture, which tho' CHRIST in *his Wisdom* did not think proper, yet which WE in *our Wisdom* have thought proper to *ordain*. In other Words, unless besides being CHRIST's *Servants*, you will also be ours; and pay Subjection to *our Institution* and Authority in this religious Rite.

This, Sir, is the true State of the Controversy betwixt us: Judge now, I pray you, with the Impartiality of a *Christian*, who makes the *Schism*, and who has reason to fear being brought into *Judgment*, by the great *Law-giver* of the Church, for the unhappy Breach which subsists. ---- Let a great *Prelate* who at present adorns one of the highest Stations of *your Church* be heard as *Judge* betwixt us. ---- “ In all other Societies, the *express Will* of the *Founder*, and the *Terms of Fellowship* and *Communion* which *he* has laid down, are accounted *sacred*. In all other Kingdoms the *Will* of the *supreme Power* is a *Law*. No one pretends, or dares pretend, to make *Laws* of equal Force with his. How hard then is the Fate of the *Christian Church*, or of the *Kingdom of CHRIST*, when *his Will* is declared *insufficient*, and the *invented Words* and *Decisions* of his Subjects are made co-ordinate with his own, equally exclusive of others of his Subjects from the *Communion* of their Fellow-Subjects! And how hard is the Fate of those *Believers* in *him*, who desire *Communion upon the Terms* GOD has prescribed, to be excluded by the *Words of Men*; by the *Inven-*

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“ tions of Men, imposed upon them for *his Precepts* !
 “ And how unhappy is the *Church*, to be reduced by
 “ any such Methods within *more narrow Bounds* than
 “ *our LORD himself has confined it* ! *

But you are in Readiness to retort, and with great Assurance tell me, “ That the *Avoidance* of Kneeling
 “ *insisted upon* by our Ministers, is not less an Imposition
 “ than your enjoining it. ---- That we do really *impose*
 “ the Observance of *one particular Gesture* upon our
 “ Communicants. ---- That *sitting* is the regular, unva-
 “ ried Practice of our Churches ; observed as constantly
 “ and universally amongst us, as *Kneeling* is amongst
 “ you, ---- *never allowed* to be departed from ; which
 “ our Ministers *require, insist upon, and refuse to abate.*” ---
 And you ask me “ If one should present himself to
 “ take the Sacrament standing, or offer to take it on
 “ his Knees, whether I don’t think he would undergo
 “ some severe Expostulations, and be plainly told, we
 “ had *no such Custom, nor the Churches of God*, and it
 “ would not be given him at all ‡.”

I believe the World will be surprized, Sir, and that
 an *ingenius Blush* will cover your own Face, when you
 find that this Account of us is absolutely without Truth,
 and quite contrary to Fact. I have spent my whole
 Life amongst *the Dissenters*, and am acquainted with a
 great Number of their Churches and Ministers ; but
 never once, till now, heard that SITTING at the Lord’s-
 Table was ever *insisted on* as a Term of Communion
 with them ; or that it is their *unvaried and universal*
 Practice. The contrary to this, I know to be Truth.
 In the Church to which I myself belong, there is a
 Person who for many Years has constantly received
 KNEELING, without the least Offence to the Congrega-

* Bishop of *Winchester*’s Postscript to his Answer to
 Dr. *Hare*’s Sermon, page 254.

‡ Letter II. pag. 56, 57, 58. Letter III. pag. 8, 9.

tion,

tion, or any Expostulation from the Minister on that Account. In some of our Churches, I am well informed, there are some who receive *Standing*, some *Kneeling*: In this every one amongst us is left entirely at his Liberty. Tho' the Posture of *Sitting* be generally thought by us most suitable to the *Commemorative-Supper* of our LORD; instituted instead of the *Paschal-Supper* of the *Jews*; and most agreeable to the Practice of CHRIST and his *Apostles*, who, without all peradventure, *Sat* around the Table; yet in this we are all left to follow freely our own Persuasion. Nor is there, I believe, amongst our Ministers one in five hundred, who would refuse to give the Sacrament either *Standing* or *Kneeling* to any one who thought *either of these* the fittest Posture of receiving. Our *Liberty* as to this Matter you might have seen in *Baxter's reform'd Liturgy*; where it is expressly said, ---- "*And let none of the People be forced to sit, stand or kneel in the Act of receiving, whose Judgment is against it.*" And in Dr. Calamy's brief Account, &c. which you appear to have read ---- "*The Communicants amongst Protestant Dissenters, are AT LIBERTY to use THEIR OWN POSTURE in the Time of Receiving; tho' a Table Gesture is most commonly used*†." Thus, Sir, I have at large considered your Charge of SCHISM upon the *Dissenters*; and hope by this time you begin to think more favourably of us; and to justify our Principles as truly *catholic* and *generous*; the only *Broad-Bottom* on which the Peace of the Church can be solidly fixed; and that the *Guilt* of the Separation lies wholly on your Church, which insists upon UNCHRISTIAN and UNSCRIPTURAL Terms of communicating with it. But I hope to finish your Conviction, Sir, and to wipe off every Speck of the Taint of Schism from *Dissenters*, by calling to your Remembrance your own excellent Definition of the *catholic* or *christian Church*;

and reasoning with you on it. "The catholic Church, is
 "you say *, is one outward and visible Society DIVINELY men
 "instituted; the most admirable and glorious Society under be
 "Heaven." ---- Mind, Sir, your own Words; and it Str
 would soon end the Debate. If it be a Society DIVINELY Pro
 instituted, then whatever Society, is not of Divine, but stor
 of meerly human Institution, is not the Church of Fou
 Christ. If it be a Society divinely instituted, then the THE
 Terms of Admission into this Society, and the Qualifica- stor
 tions of its Members are divinely fix'd, i. e. fixed by I
 the Will and Authority of God: Whatever visible who
 Society then hath its Terms of Admission and the Quali- into
 fications of its Members NOT divinely fix'd, fix'd only by cept
 the Will and Authority of Men, cannot be the truly whi
 catholic and christian Church. In

Now here shall I intreat you, Sir, with the Imparti- used
 ality of a Christian, who has nothing but Truth and the Chun
 Will of God in view, to stop a Moment and compare used
 the CONSTITUTION of the Church of England, and the Post
 CONSTITUTION of the Church of Christ, and see if they and
 are not Societies of a quite different Frame; the one a ing
 human, the other a divine Institution; the one resting latte
 entirely on the Authority and Will of Men, the other discr
 upon the Will and Authority of GOD. Dist

If you enquire after the Constitution and Frame of In
 the Church of Christ, where must you look for it? only scan
 in the Bible †. But if you enquire after the Constitu- Tab
 tion and Frame of the Church of England, where must but i
 you look for that? in the Statute-book, in the Canons, missi
 and Common-prayer-book, and in the Codes of the English any
 Law. the

The Church of CHRIST is a religious Establishment, Elem
 founded upon the Scriptures, as the only authentic Rule his I
 of its Doctrines and Worship; the Church of ENGLAND In
 ----- ficers

* Letter I. pag. 73. † The Bible only is the Reli- Prebe
 gion of Protestants. Chillingworth. ther C

Church, is a civil Establishment, founded upon *Acts of Parliament*, as the only authentic Rule of what is to be believed and practised therein. The one a *spiritual Structure*, built upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, JESUS CHRIST himself being the chief Corner-stone: The other a *political Structure*, built upon the Foundation of the Lords and Commons of the Realm, THE KING, as supreme Head, being the chief Corner-stone.

Into the *Church of Christ* any Person may be admitted, who submits to the *Terms* appointed by *Christ*: But, into the *Church of England*, he cannot be admitted, except over and above *these*, he submits also to *Terms* which *human Authority* hath instituted and devised.

In *Christ's Church* the Lord's-supper is appointed and used ONLY for *spiritual and religious Ends*; but, in the *Church of England*, it is notoriously both instituted and used for *political and worldly Ends*, to qualify for a Post. In the *former* 'twas appointed with Intention, and as a *mean* of uniting all Christians; and of destroying all Variance and Distinctions betwixt them. In the *latter* 'tis appointed with Intention, and as a *Mean* of *discriminating and dividing* Christians; and of making a *Distinction* betwixt one and another.

In the *Christian Church*, no openly debauched or scandalously wicked Person has a *Right* to come to the Table of the Lord, or to partake of its Provisions; but in the *Church of England*, if such a Person has a Commission from the King in the Army or the Fleet, or any profitable Post, this gives him a *Right* to come to the Communion-Table, a *Right* to demand the holy Elements at the *Priest's Hands*, as a Qualification for his Post.

In the *scriptural Church* of Christ, there are no such Officers ever heard of as *Anchbishops, Deans, Archdeacons, Prebendaries, Canons, Chancellors, &c.* ---- But there is another Church, you know, Sir, where *these* are Officers of great

great Influence, of high Importance and Rank. But whence came this pompous Train? From the *apostolick* Fountain at *Jerusalem*, or from the *corrupted* Source at *Rome*?

The *Church of Christ* never excommunicates, nor pretends to exercise its Discipline upon any but its own Members; *For what have I to do*, the Apostle says, *to judge them that are without**? But the *Church of England* extends its ecclesiastical Authority over those who never belonged to it; and by a very extraordinary Act of Power, *excommunicates* such as *never were* of its *Communion*; that is, it casts such *from*, who never were *in* it. In common Life such a Thing would be reckoned *marvellous* indeed. Should I solemnly threaten, {yea actually proceed to cast a Person out of my House, who never was in it, I should work as great a Miracle as was ever wrought in the *Church of Rome*: But Miracles of this kind, Sir, your Church, you know sometimes works.

Again; the Rod with which the *Church of Christ* chastises its Delinquents is *spiritual*, not *carnal*; but the Rod of the *Church of England* is *carnal*, not *spiritual*. By the Constitution of the *former*, the excommunicated Member is only to be deprived of *spiritual* Privileges, such as Fellowship in Prayer, Singing, Sacraments, &c. As for his civil Property and Rights, it meddles not with these; *for CHRIST's Kingdom is not of this World*; but by the Constitution of the *latter*, the excommunicated Member is delivered over to the *civil Arm*, to humble and chastise him; he is disabled from asserting his natural Rights, from being a Witness, from bringing Actions at Law, and if he does not submit in *forty Days*, a Writ shall issue forth to *imprison him*.---

In the *Church of Jesus Christ*, those who are entrusted with ecclesiastical Discipline are solemnly *charged before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect Angels*, to be

* 1 Cor. v. 12.

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But no Respecters of Persons, to do nothing by Partiality, and not to prefer one before another †: Neither the Gold Ring nor the gay Cloathing ‡, nor pecuniary Gifts, are to have any Influence upon their ecclesiastical Proceedings; but the Poor are to receive the same Measure with the Rich. But is it thus, Sir, in the Church of England? May not a grievous Sinner, according to her Constitution, be suffered to commute? to have Pardon for Money, and to skreen himself by a round Fee from the Stroke of the Church's Rod? Yea, when he is going to be delivered, or actually is delivered, into the Hands of the Devil, and Satan has him in his Keeping, will not an handsome Sum presently pluck him thence, and restore him to the Church's soft and indulgent Bosom again? ---- You remember, Sir, the Heathen Satyrist,

----- At vos

Dicite Pontifices, in Sacris quid facit Aurum.

Perfius Sat. II.

And you know what was said, upon a like Occasion, by a much greater than he ---- *Thy Money perish with thee; because thou hast thought that the Gift of God (Pardon and Absolution) may be purchased with Money, thou hast neither Part nor Lot in this Matter* *.

Some of the most sacred Acts of spiritual Jurisdiction, its solemn Censures and Excommunications, are exercised in the Church of England by unconsecrated and meer Laymen. These hold the Keys, open or shut, cast out or admit to it, according to their sole Pleasure. The Chancellors, Officials, Surrogates ---- who administer the Jurisdiction of spiritual Courts, and determine the most important spiritual Matters, such as delivering Men to the Devil, &c. frequently are, and by express Provision of Law, always may be Laymen. And truly, Sir, I greatly pity you Gentlemen of the Clergy, that some of the most tremendous and solemn Parts of your

† 1 Tim. v. 21. ‡ James ii. 2, 3. * Acts viii. 20, 21.

sacred Office, such as *Excommunications*, *Absolutions*, &c. you are *forced* to perform, not according to, but sometimes, perhaps, directly against your own Judgments, as you are *authoritatively* directed and commanded by these *Lay-persons*.

Forced, I say, to do it, notwithstanding what you urge about your own *Concurrence*; for if you refuse to concur, you are immediately liable to *Suspension ab officio* & *beneficio*; and if you continue obstinate, to be *excommunicated* your own selves ‡.

The Church of JESUS CHRIST never owed its Support (it scorned to owe its Propagation and Support) to the Powers, Preferments and Riches of this World; 'twas its Glory, that it made its Way, and was established upon Earth, not only *without*, but in direct Opposition to them: It commands its Ministers *not to STRIVE*, but to be gentle to all Men; in Meekness, instructing those who gainsay--- (2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.) But the Church of England, conscious of its Weakness, props itself on every Side with civil Dignities and Emoluments; calls in the Powers and Riches of *this World* to its Support and Defence; intrenches itself deep under Shelter of *penal Laws*, and from thence thunders out its *Excommunications*, and Threats of *Fines*, and *Imprisonments*, upon any who shall dare to write or speak any thing derogatory to its Ceremonies and Forms of Worship, or its Articles of Faith *.

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‡ There is one Thing, says Bishop Burnet, yet wanting to compleat the Reformation of the Church; which is to restore primitive Discipline against scandalous Persons, the establishing the Government of the Church in *Ecclesiastical Hands*, and taking it out of *Lay-Hands*, which have so long prophaned it; and have exposed the Authority of the Church and the Censures of it, chiefly *Excommunication*, to the Contempt of the Nation; so that the dreadfullest of all Censures, is now become the most scorned and despised. --- *Hist. Reform. Abridg.* Pag. 367.

* The IV. V. VIth *Canons* solemnly denounce ---- "That whosoever shall affirm that the Form of God's Worship contained in the *Common-prayer*,

There is one Difficulty more, Sir, which I have often revolved, but could never possibly get over ; it seems to hang as a *dead and insuperable* Weight upon the Frame of your Church ; if you can handsomely remove it, you will merit *Lambeth* for a Reward.

The *Church of England* and the *Church of Christ* seem to be *two* Societies, absolutely *distinct*, and of a quite *different* Constitution, as they have *two* different **HEADS**, or **FOUNTAINS of Power**, whence all Authority, Jurisdiction, and Ministrations in the *two* Churches severally spring. In the Church of *Jesus Christ*, HIMSELF is *supreme Head*, the only Law-giver and Sovereign : *To us there is but ONE Lord* *. *ONE is your Master, even CHRIST* †. *Gave him to be HEAD over all Things to the Church* ‡. *ALL POWER is given to ME, in Heaven, and in Earth, go ye therefore teach all Nations* §. **CHRIST** is the **ONLY Fountain** of Influence, Jurisdiction, and Power in *his* Church, by Commission from whom *alone* all its Officers act.

But in the Church of *England*, you well know, Sir, the *King or Queen* is **SUPREME HEAD**, “ vested with *all Power* “ to exercise all Manner of *Ecclesiastical* Jurisdiction, and “ *Archbishops, Bishops, Archdeacons*, and other Ecclesiastical Persons, have *no Manner* of Jurisdiction ecclesiastical, but by and under the *KING’s Majesty*, who hath

“ *Common prayer*, hath any Thing in it repugnant to the Word of “ *GOD* ---- or that any of the **XXXIX Articles** are in any Part erroneous, or such as may not with a good Conscience be subscribed, let “ him be **EXCOMMUNICATED** *ipso facto*, and not be restored until he “ repent and publicly revoke his wicked Errors.”

And by the *Act of Uniformity*, it is enacted ---- “ That if any one “ shall declare, or speak any Thing in the Derogation or depraving of “ the Book of *Common-prayer*, he shall, for the *first* Offence, suffer Imprisonment one whole Year, without Bail or Mainprize ; and for “ the *second* Offence shall be imprisoned during his Life.”

* 1 Cor. viii. 6. † Matt. xxiii. 8. ‡ Ephes. i. 22. § Matt. xxviii. 18, 19.

“ full Power and Authority to hear and determine *all*
 “ *Manner* of Causes ecclesiastical, and to reform, and
 correct *all* Vice, Sin, Errors, Heresies, Enormities,
 “ Abuses whatsoever, which by *any Manner* of spi-
 “ ritual Authority or Jurisdiction ought, or may
 “ be lawfully reformed *.” ----

At the first Establishment of this Church under *Hen.*
VIII. and *Edw. VI.* all the *Bishops* took out Commis-
 sions from *the CROWN*, for the exercising of their *spi-*
ritual Jurisdiction in these Kingdoms, during the *King's*
 Pleasure only; “ and in their Commissions acknowledge
 “ all sort of Jurisdiction, as well ecclesiastical as civil, to
 “ have flowed originally from the *REGAL Power*, as
 “ from a *supreme Head*, and a *Fountain and Spring* of
 “ all Magistracy within his own Kingdom †.”

Yea, even the *Power of Ordination* itself, which is
 reckoned a *Peculiar* of the episcopal Office, the first
 Reformers and Founders of this Church derived from
 the *KING*, and exercised only as by Authority from
him, and during his Pleasure. “ Thus *Cranmer Arch-*
bishop of Canterbury, Bonner Bishop of London, &c.
 “ took out Commissions from *the Crown*, importing,
 “ that because the Vicegerent (*Cromwell*, a Lay-person)
 “ could not personally attend the Charge in all Parts of
 “ the Kingdom, *the KING* authorises *the Bishop* in his
 “ (the *King's*) Stead, to ordain, within his Diocese,
 “ such as he judged worthy of holy Orders; to collate
 “ to Benefices; to give Institution; and to execute
 “ all other Parts of the Episcopal Authority; and this
 “ during the *King's Pleasure* only ‡.”

In consequence of this SUPREMACY, the *KING* or *QUEEN*
 of *this Church* hath Power to excommunicate from, or
 to re-admit into it, independent of, yea, in direct
 Opposition to, all its *Bishops* and *Clergy*. The *KING*

* 26 *Hen. VIII.* Cap. i. 37 *Hen. VIII.* Cap. xvii. 1 *Eliz.* Cap. i.
 † Eurnet's Hist. Reform. Part II. Col. p. 91. ‡ *Vid.* Examina-
 tion of the *Codex Juris*, &c. Pag. 32, 33.

OR QUEEN, may revoke, if they please, any spiritual Censures of the *Bishops* or *Archbishops* ; yea, can suspend, deprive, or even excommunicate, themselves ; or can, by their Proclamation only, without the least Confession, Humiliation, or Satisfaction for their Offence, pardon and restore *excommunicated Persons*, the vilest Offenders, to the Church's Bosom again §.

Yea, further ; they have Power to forbid all Preaching for a Time ; as did K. *Hen. VIII.* K. *Edw. VI.* Q. *Mary*, Q. *Eliz.* ---- to limit, instruct, and prescribe to the *Clergy* what they shall, and what they shall not preach ; as did Q. *Eliz.* K. *James I.* K. *Charles I.* K. *William*, &c. ---- Finally, to the *King* or *Queen* ONLY, does it pertain to declare *what is* HERESY, and *authoritatively* to pronounce what *Doctrines* and *Tenets* are, and what are not, to be censured as such : Nor have all the *Bishops* and *Clergy*, assembled in Convocation, the least Authority to censure any Tenet as *heretical*, if the PRINCE on the Throne refuse his Consent.

Now here, Sir, I am pressed with an *insuperable Difficulty* how to reconcile this Constitution of the *Church of England* with the Constitution of the *Church of Christ*. Are they not most indisputably *two different Societies*, subject to *two different*, sometimes *opposite*, Authorities, animated and governed by *two different Heads* ? In CHRIST'S Church, HIMSELF is the *only* Sovereign and Head ; HE only hath Power to decree Ceremonies and Rites, to fix Terms of Communion and Authority in Points of Faith : Nor hath any *earthly Prince* Power to make Laws in *his Kingdom*, which shall bind the Consciences of *his Subjects* ; or sovereignly to dictate to *his Servants* and *Ministers* what they shall believe, and what

§ A *Parson* was deprived for Adultery ; afterwards a general Pardon came, which pardoned the Adultery. It was adjudged that the *Parson* was *ipso facto*, restored to his Benefice. COKE 6 Rep. 13.

they

they shall preach. Yea, *his Subjects* are expressly commanded and charged to receive nothing as *Doctrine* or *Parts of Religion*, which are only *Commandments of Men*†.

But in the *Church of England* there is ANOTHER *Sovereign, Law-giver, SUPREME HEAD* besides *JESUS CHRIST*; an *Authority* which commands Things which *CHRIST* never commanded, which teaches *Doctrines* *HE* never taught, which enjoins *Terms of Communion*, and *Rites of religious Worship*, which *CHRIST* never enjoined. --- What now can I judge, Sir! What do you yourself judge! but that the *two Churches* are two distinct and quite different Societies (for in one and the same Society, surely there cannot be two *supreme Heads*) that they are framed after different Models, consist of different Members, are governed by different Officers, Statutes and Laws, --- Consequently, my SEPARATION or DISSENT from *the one*, does, by no Means infer my SEPARATION from *the other*. Yea, what am I to judge but that by the Allegiance I owe to *CHRIST* my ONLY *supreme Head and King* in spiritual Matters, I am obliged to enter my Protest against the Pretensions and Claims of any OTHER *supreme Head*. For, can a Man serve two Masters? Can he be subject at the same Time to two *supreme Heads*? Can he be faithful to *CHRIST*, the only KING in the Church, and yet acknowledge another King, as a Fountain of all Magistracy and Power therein? Surely he cannot.

Permit me, good Sir, to exercise your Patience a Moment or two more upon this remarkable Contrast, and I will dismiss the ungrateful Subject.

By the Constitution of the *Church of Christ*, 'tis expressly order'd and declared --- That *the Woman shall not be suffered publickly to teach, nor to usurp Authority over the Man*†. But by the Constitution of the *Church of England*, the *Woman* is permitted publickly to teach,

† Matt. xv. 9. † 1 Tim. ii. 12.

yea, to limit and controul in *spiritual* and *religious* Matters, and authoritatively to *instruct* all the *Bishops*, and *Clergy*, and *Men* in the Land. Thus did Queen *Elizabeth*, thus did Queen *Anne*, and thus hath every Queen Authority to do that sits upon our Throne ; Authority to *prescribe* and *dictate* to all, both Ministers and People, what the one are to preach, and the other to receive. And was it not, Sir, a very comely and edifying Sight, to behold the two Houses of Convocation waiting upon the good Q. (*Anne**) in the Case of *Whiston's* Books upon the Trinity, to be *instructed* by her Majesty whether they were to be condemned as *heretical*, or not? that venerable and learned Body had solemnly decreed them to be *dangerous* and *heretical* ; but this their *Censure* was of no Force, till they had laid it before *the Queen*, to have her Judgment upon the Point. Upon her Majesty's Determination it *entirely* depended, whether *Whiston's* Tenets were to be *rejected* by the *Church of England* as erroneous, or not. Her Majesty, in this Case, was of a *different* Opinion from her two Houses of Convocation ; she thought not fit to censure the Books: So her *single* Opinion, strange to relate ! her *single* Opinion carries it against that of *her Bishops* and *Clergy*. She overrules and sets aside all their Proceedings, *restrains* and *counteracts* them in one of the very chief of their *pastoral* Functions, the guarding against Errors and Heresies in the Church.

Behold here, Sir, A WOMAN exercising spiritual ecclesiastical Authority over *the Man* ! Yea, behold *the Representative* of the Clergy of the whole Land, a most learned, grave and venerable Body, waiting upon A WOMAN to learn from her Mouth, what *the Church* is to believe, and what to reject, as to this great *Mystery of Faith* : Upon A WOMAN, who could be supposed to know

* Anno 1711.

as little of this Matter as of the Motion of the Stars; yet, by her *sole* Determination, (I repeat it with Astonishment, and you hear it, no doubt, with Perplexity and Grief) *your Church* was uncontrollably and authoritatively directed in this deep and mysterious Point.

I ask you, Sir, in the *Name of God*, Is *this* the Constitution and Frame of the *Church of CHRIST*? Is it not a *Constitution* of a quite different Nature; a Society not *DIVINELY*, but *humanly* instituted; and therefore, by your own Definition, NOT the *Church of Christ*? And may not, think you, a Person separate peaceably from it, without any the least Danger of thereby separating himself from the one scriptural, apostolic, and catholic Church?

When you strip the *Pope* of his *SUPREMACY*, and gave it to our *Princes*, you should have taken Care not to have left his *INFALIBILITY* behind. An *infallible Head* and Director of the *Church*, be it *Woman* or *Man*, be it an *He* or a *She-bishop*, is a Thing plausible enough, and carries a good Face: But, to lodge the absolute Direction of the *Consciences*, the *Faith* and the *Discipline* of the *Church* with a *fallible Head*! to give a *Prince* yea a *LADY* bred up in all the Softnesses and Diversions of a Court, an uncontrollable Dominion over the religious Conduct both of Clergy and Laity, authoritatively to direct what *those* are to preach, and what *these* to believe as the *Doctrine of CHRIST*! to make *HER* the *sole Judge* in all Controversies which shall arise upon any the most mysterious and inexplicable Points; so that *all the Priests* are to ask *Knowledge* at *HER Lips*, and whatever *she* determines is to be received by the *Church* as *Christian Verity* and *Truth*! This is such a *Constitution* as quite shocks the Understanding, and comes not a whit behind *Transubstantiation* itself. Hence doubtless, Sir, the Triumphs of *Popish Priests* over you. Hence their Inroads upon you, and the Thousand they are continually carrying captive from your Tents.

And hence the sad Increase, and the Insults of *Deists*, who taking the Scheme of the *Church of England* to be that of the *Christian Church*, are authoris'd by common Sense, they think, not only to reject, but to treat it with Contempt!

And now, Sir, having so largely discuss'd this Point, I presume you are convinced, " *That this same peaceable Separation of ours is not, what you call it, a Piece of arrant Nonsense and Contradiction;*" and that you will cease to be so displeased at our treating your grave Lectures upon the heinous Sin of SCHISM, as *solemn Cant and Ecclesiastical Scare-crows*. You see, likewise, how extremely unapt, and quite wide of the Point, are the *two Instances* you bring to illustrate our Case, viz. " of a Wife separating from the Bed and Board of her Husband ---- Or of two or three Countries disliking a monarchical Government, and throwing off their Allegiance to the King *". Has the *Church of England*, Sir, any such Power or Authority over us *Dissenters*, as the Husband has over the Wife? ---- Pray who gave it that Authority? Have we ever plighted it our Troth? or bound ourselves by a solemn Vow to honour and obey it to the End of our Life? ---- Or have we ever sworn Allegiance to it; or do we owe it any Homage; as *the Counties* have sworn and do owe to the King?

Amongst the *peculiar Excellencies* of your *Church* you reckon " The Use of the *three Creeds* in publick Worship; as one of the most effectual and powerful Means both for teaching and preserving the *Christian Faith* entire and uncorrupt, which we have not in our Churches †." The *Creed* called *the Apostles*, we have in constant use amongst us: And as for the *two other*, especially the *Athanasian*, we are content you should have the Honour of its being *peculiar* to your-

* *Lett. I. Page 72.* † *Lett. I. Pag. 15.*

selves. But methinks, Sir, it should a little check your Triumph over us here, to remember, that some of the wisest and most illustrious Members of your Church, both Clergy and Laity, account the Use of *this Creed* your great Sin and Reproach, and with A. B. Tillotson, *wish you were well rid of it.*

What are you, Sir, amongst the *weak and uncharitable Minds* who *damn to the Pit of Hell* all who cannot receive all the dark and *mysterious Points* set forth in that Creed! Do you in your Conscience think that there is NO SALVATION *for those who do not faithfully believe* the several Articles it contains; and that *whosoever doth not keep whole and undefiled the Faith therein deliver'd, he shall WITHOUT DOUBT perish everlastingly?* What! the many great and worthy Persons, bright Ornaments of your own Church, who instead of *keeping it whole and undefiled*, have openly disavow'd, preach'd and wrote against it, dying in this Disbelief, have they *without peradventure everlastingly perish'd?* Alas! for the good Doctors, *Clarke, Whitby, Burnet, &c.* ---- For the illustrious Sir *Isaac, &c. &c.* Yea, alas! for the whole *Greek Church*, who have strenuously rejected the Article of the *Filioq*; ---- They are gone down, it seems, to the *infernal Pit!* And notwithstanding their great Knowledge and Piety in this World, are, for not believing the *Athanasian Creed*, sunk into EVERLASTING DARKNESS and DAMNATION in the other! Do you wonder *Deism* prevails, if this be genuine *Christianity?*

'Tis a Fact, I presume, indisputable, that a great Part of the most learned and virtuous of your Clergy are departed from the *Athanasian Doctrine*; and that those of them who are not, do by no means think its Belief *absolutely and indispensably necessary* to Salvation. What now must a *Deist* think, when he hears both the one and the other *thirteen Times a Year*, most solemnly declaring in the Presence of *Almighty God*, and as *Instructors of his People*, that *whoever will be saved,*

saved, it is before all Things necessary that he hold the ATHANASIAN Faith; and most peremptorily denouncing EVERLASTING DAMNATION upon those who do not believe it; that is, many of them denouncing DAMNATION upon themselves! --- Is this your "powerful and effectual Means" of preserving the Christian Faith? --- I should think it one of the most effectual to subvert and destroy it. It has no doubt, been in Fact a great Stumbling-block in the Way of Infidels and Jews, and harden'd them in their Opposition to the Religion of CHRIST, when they see it dooming to undoubted and everlasting Perdition all who do not heartily and sincerely believe (for that must be meant by faithfully) these deep and mysterious Points, which we acknowledge to be inexplicable, and far above the Powers of Reason to comprehend.

*"But the Dissenting Ministers, you tell me, who have complied with the Terms of the Toleration, have solemnly subscribed the VIIIth Article which approves the Athanasian Creed *." Let Dr. Calamy answer †. "The dissenting Ministers about the City, in a Body, gave in their Sense of the Articles when they subscribed them, and among the rest of this VIIIth Article, in the Gloss upon which, the damnatory Clauses of this Creed are expressly excluded the Subscription. ---- And there was something of the same Nature done in several Parts of the Country." Now the Fathers and Predecessors of the present dissenting Ministers having made this public Protest and Declaration at their Subscription, and the Legislature having accepted, or at least not rejected it; under the Favour of this Protest, their Successors may be supposed now to subscribe with the same Disapprobation of the damnatory Clause. If it were not to be thus taken, there is, I hope, not a Minister among*

* Appendix, Page 78. † Life of Mr. Baxter, Page 236.

us but would publickly disown and renounce his Subscription.

I should now proceed, Sir, to the Examination of other Parts of your Letters, to shew the great *Insufficiency* of your Arguments and Objections; and to observe, that in many Instances, you have extremely mistaken and given quite wrong Representations of our religious Principles and Practice ---- But I relieve your Patience at present. ---- If this Province be undertaken by no other Hand, you may in some Time, by divine Permission, expect to hear farther from,

Sir,

Your very humble Servant,

A DISSENTER.

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T H E

Dissenting Gentleman's

S E C O N D L E T T E R, &c.

S I R,

TIS with some Regret I proceed in Vindication of my Dissent, as it will constrain me to say some Things which may seem to be disrespectful to *established Forms* of Worship. But *Self-Defence* is a Principle which generous Minds allow strongly to operate. I highly reverence and esteem, and most heartily rejoice in the great Number of illustrious and excellent Persons, both *Clergy* and *Laity*, which the Church of *England* can boast. But yet, as the present *establish'd Forms* were drawn up when this Kingdom just emerg'd out of *Popish* Darkness; and as in Drawing them up, *especial Regard* was had to the *then* Weakness of the People, who could not be all at once entirely brought off from the old Ceremonies and Forms: As there are several Parts of our Liturgy, and ecclesiastical Constitution, which a great Number, I apprehend, if not all our *Bishops* and *Clergy*, wish to see alter'd: And finally, as the Alteration of those, and the removing a few Things, acknowledg'd in themselves to be *mutable* and *indifferent*, would heal the *unhappy Breach*, and restore the chief Part of the Dissenters to the Church.— Upon all these Accounts, I may be allow'd, I hope, with Freedom to make *my Defence* against your vigorous Attacks; and to represent my Objections, and the Grounds of my *Dissent*, in as strong a Light as I am able.

The

The Part of a publick *Monitor*, and of my *Instructor* in this Affair, which you have *voluntarily* taken on you, will allow me, as I go along, to put you in mind of a great Objection or two which Dissenters are wont to urge, but which you have quite overlook'd, and to intreat you will direct me How to get over them.

“ We Letter-Writers, say you, have a Privilege of “ setting down our Thoughts as they offer themselves, “ without scrupulously adhering to strict and close “ Method *.” This Privilege you have indeed with great Freedom taken: I shall therefore be indulg'd the same.

To begin then with your Defence of SPONSORS in *Baptism*. It is the Opinion of the *Dissenters*, that when an *Infant* is brought to be enter'd by Baptism into the Family or Church of God, and a solemn *Vow* and *Engagement* is to be made before the Church for its religious *Education*; that the PARENTS, whose Child it is, and to whom both God and Nature have committed its Education; that *those*, I say, are the proper Persons to stand forth, and take upon them this great and important Trust; and to bind themselves by a solemn *Vow* faithfully to discharge it. Now our Objections to the Order and Practice of *your Church* are,

1. That in a very arbitrary and strange Manner, without the least Shadow of Authority from *Reason* or *Scripture*, or the *ancient Practice* of the Church, you actually SET ASIDE the Parents in this Solemnity; and FORBID them to stand forth, and take upon them this great Charge to which God hath called them. For your XXIXth Canon expressly commands, *That no Parent shall be urged to be present at his Child's Baptism, nor be ADMITTED to answer as Godfather for his own Child*. And,

2. That you require other Persons to appear in the Parents Stead, and to take upon them this important

* Lett. III. p. 60.

Trust, and most solemnly to promise before God, and the Church, the Performance of that, which few of them ever do, or ever intended to perform; or, perhaps, are ever capable of performing. What now, Sir, is your Answer to these *Objections* of the Dissenters? Why, truly, the *first*, which is indeed the *chief*, you very prudently *skip over*; and attempt not the least Apology for *setting aside* the Parents; so that you leave us still to consider *this*, as a Thing utterly indefensible, unlawful, absurd, and which will admit of no Excuse.

But as to the *second*, viz. the *solemn Vow and Obligation* under which the *Sureties* lay themselves, to this you largely speak; and tell me --- “It is a gross Mistake to imagine, that the Promises there made by the *Sureties* concerning the future Faith and Practice of the Child, are made in their *own Name*: As if they engaged thereby, that, when it is grown up, it shall actually believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith, shall renounce the Devil and all his Works, &c. Whereas the Church considers *these Answers*, as the CHILD’s *Answers*, only made by its *Representatives*; they contain ITS *Part* of the baptismal Covenant or Contract; which, because, by Reason of its tender Age, it cannot *itself* utter, is utter’d by its *Sureties*---*.” But if this be, Sir, a *gross Mistake*, the most celebrated of your own *Writers* have led us into it. “The *Sureties* in Baptism, says your learned Dr. Nichols †, religiously ENGAGE for the Faith of the baptised; that they SHALL sincerely believe all that is revealed in the Gospel, and SHALL direct the subsequent Actions of their Lives by the *Laws of Christ*.” A Cloud of Witnesses, I believe, can be brought from the *Doctors* of your Church, whose Judgment is the same. But no wonder the Learned differ in so mysterious a Point. --- You go on and affirm --- “That the *Sureties* are, by the Church, con-

* Lett. I. p. 31. † Nichols’s Defence, &c. Part II. p. 273.

“ sidered in this Affair, *no otherwise* than as *the Mouth*
 “ of the Child. ---- You see, Sir, here are no *Promises*
 “ NOR *Engagements* which ANY besides *the CHILD* are
 “ supposed to enter into, and to be bound by. Read
 “ over the Office of publick Baptism, you will not find,
 “ I assure you, ANY *Promises or Stipulations* at all made
 “ by *the Sureties* in their own Name: I mean any that
 “ are explicit §.” But this Account of the Matter ap-
 pears to me extremely dark; and rather greatly to
 strengthen than remove our Objections. For,

First, It represents *the Church* as acting a very ex-
 traordinary and unaccountable Part; viz. as receiving
 a Child to Baptism, on Account of ITS OWN Faith, and
 ITS OWN Promise, utter'd by its Sureties; when, at the
 same time, it knows, *the Child* neither does nor can,
 either promise or believe any more than the Font at
 which 'tis baptised. It considers the Child as ACTUALLY
 covenanting and contracting, yea, as the ONLY covenant-
 ing and contracting Party in this Solemnity, when it
 knows it to be absolutely incapable of either. It re-
 presents *the Church* as very solemnly asking *the CHILD*---
Dost thou believe? Wilt thou be baptised? Dost thou for-
sake the Devil? &c. When it is fully persuaded of its
 utter Inability to believe, or resolve, or will any Thing
 about it. Now when a Deist stands by, and sees a
 learned and grave Divine thus asking, and talking, and
 covenanting with a Child, can you wonder, Sir, if he
 smiles, and merrily treats the whole Transaction as a Jest?

“ *The Answers*, you say, are considered by *the Church*
 “ as only *the Answers* of the Child, and contain ITS Part
 “ of the baptismal Covenant; which because, by Reason of
 “ its tender Age, it cannot itself utter, is to be uttered by
 “ its Sureties:” That is to say, the Child thinks, but
 cannot speak: It really covenants, contracts, promises, but
 not being able by Reason of its tender Age to utter

its good Intentions, these *Sureties* are its *Mouth* to utter them for it. But why, good Sir, its *Mouth* to speak for it; and not its *Understanding* also to think for it; its *Will* to promise for it; and indeed its *Soul*, and its *very self*, to covenant and contract for it? Is not *the Child*, by Reason of its tender Age, as absolutely incapable of *Covenanting*, as 'tis of *Uttering*; of *Contracting*, as 'tis of *Speaking*? If the *Surety* therefore does *one* of these good Offices for it, he undoubtedly does *the other* also. But,

Secondly. If there be, as you say, NO *Promises* NOR *Engagements* which any *besides* the Child are supposed to enter into, or to be bound by; the Consequence is extreamly plain, that then there are no *Promises* nor *Engagements* entered into at all, for its *religious Education*. For *the Child* surely, does not *engage* for its *own* religious Education. If the *Sureties* therefore do not enter into any Promise of this Kind, it evidently follows, that there are no express *Engagements* entered into by any for the Child's Education. And thus, behold, your boasted *double Security*, turns out at last *no Security* at all! But, a *Surety* not bound! a *Sponsor* promising *nothing*! a *Security* unengaged! This is Language, Sir, in the *mercantile*, whatever it may be in the *scholastic* Way of Life, absolutely unintelligible. But to retort your own Instance; my Lawyer I should think a very wrong-headed Man, who should pretend to lend my Money upon a *double Security*, and make a Merit of so doing, when at the same Time he confessed, there were *no Promises*, nor *Engagements*, by which *either* of the *Securities* were explicitly bound.

To be plain, Sir; as for this Business of a Child's believing, promising, covenanting by *Representative* or *Proxy*, I cannot but think a Gentleman of your Penetration, will easily perceive it to be a Thing absolutely inexplicable, impossible, and absurd; a Thing utterly repugnant to Reason and common Sense, and without the

the least Shadow of Foundation in the *Christian* Religion. For if by the Constitution of the Gospel Covenant, a Child may *believe* by Proxy, *repent* by Proxy, *vow*, *promise*, and *contract* by Proxy, he may also, no doubt, *be saved* by Proxy, or *be damned* by Proxy. But, into what a Jest will this turn the Religion of *Christ*?

As for the *Antiquity* of this Practice, *Sponsors in Baptism*, you have the good Sense and Ingenuity not to pretend it was ever known, or so much as thought of, in the primitive *apostolic* Church. *Tertullian*, who lived about *Anno Dom.* 200, is the *first*, I apprehend, of all Christian Writers, that makes any mention of them. Nor does it at all follow from what *he* says, that these *Sponsors* were any other than *the Parents* of the Child. *Justin Martyr*, who wrote fifty Years before him, when he particularly describes the Method and Form of *Christian Baptism* in his Days, says not a *single Word* of any such Persons *.

But we learn from *St. Austin*, about the Year 390 (one of the earliest of Christian Writers, in which any mention of them is found) *when*, and upon *what* Occasion, these *Sponsors* were admitted. "A great many," says he, are offered to Baptism, not by their Parents, but by others; as *Infant-Slaves* are sometimes offered by their Masters. And sometimes when the Parents are dead, the Infants are baptized, being offered by any, who can afford to shew this Compassion to them. And sometimes Infants whom their Parents have cruelly exposed, to be brought up by those who light on them, are now and then taken up by the holy Virgins, and offered to Baptism by them who have no Children of their own, nor design to have any."----These are † *Austin's* words. Observe now *Dr. Wall's* ‡ ingenious Confession on them (and

* Vid. Lord King's Enquiry, Part II. p. 67, 68.

† Epist. ad Bonifac. ‡ Hist. Inf. Bap. Vol. I. p. 196.

the good Doctor you know, Sir, was never partial in Favour of Dissenters, but a severe Remarker on them:)

“ *Here we see the ordinary Use then was for Parents to answer for the Children: But yet that this was not counted so necessary, as that a Child could not be baptized without it.*”

Hence then it is plain, that *Parents* never were set aside, when they were capable and willing to offer their Children; and that only in Cases of *Parents Incapacity*, were *Sponsors* admitted: And in all such Cases, Dissenters also use them. Why now, I beseech you, Sir, in Defiance of this acknowledged Usage and Practice of the *ancient Church*, as well as of *common Sense*, does your Church severely decree, “ *That no PARENT shall be urged to be PRESENT at his Child’s Baptism, nor be ADMITTED to answer as Godfather for it?*” What! would the Parents standing forth together with the Sponsors, and promising jointly with them, at all detract from this Solemnity, or render it *less effectual*, to secure the Child’s religious Education? It is most evident it would not, and that your Practice in this Point is undoubtedly an *Innovation*; an unreasonable, absurd, and arbitrary *Deviation* from the Usage and Institution of the primitive *apostolic Church*; an *Absurdity* very generally acknowledged, and complained of, by the Members of your Church, though not attempted to be reformed.

“ But by this Institution of Godfathers and Godmothers, you say, your Church affords its Members some great and special Advantage towards growing in Grace and Goodness, above what are found amongst us.” And you tell me, “ you lay a great Stress upon it, as a wise, an useful, and necessary Institution §.” ---- But did you not consider, Sir, that you were here highly reflecting upon the Wisdom and Goodness, not of the holy Apostles only, but of your great Law-giver JESUS CHRIST? These

SPECIAL ADVANTAGES *for Growth in Goodness and Holiness*, how came it to pass that the great *Founders* of the *Christian Church* never happened to think of them? You do not pretend it to be an *Institution* of JESUS CHRIST's, and yet are not afraid to call it a *wise*, an *useful*, and even a NECESSARY *Institution*. Strange! that CHRIST, in whom were hid all the *Treasures of Wisdom*, and who loved the Church so as to lay down his Life for it, should not know this Institution to be so especially advantageous to the growing Goodness of his Church; or that knowing it to be so, he should unkindly omit it; and that we are obliged to the superior Wisdom and Goodness of *after Ages* for supplying this Defect. It has usually been thought, that the *Apostles* declared the WHOLE Council of God; and kept back Nothing from the Church which was profitable to it; and that the *Scriptures* are a perfect Rule; but this, it seems, is not true; you have discover'd it, Sir, to be not true: For here you shew us a *wise*, an *useful*, and a NECESSARY *Institution*, which they really kept back; and which had it not been for the Sagacity of their Successors, the Church had been so unhappy as never to have known. Into what Mazes Men plunge themselves, when they deviate from the Truth!

Of the same *Temerity* you are guilty, Sir, when treating of another *Institution* of your Church, CONFIRMATION, and glorying over us in its Want. "Another Administration of our Church is *Confirmation*; this you know you have wholly discarded: And surely you will be obliged to acknowledge you have lost thereby a very great Advantage --- greatly conducive to future Holiness of Life ‡" Yes, Sir, this we will freely own, when you also will acknowledge, that you are wiser than the *Apostles*; and can better judge what is conducive to *Holiness*, and for the Advantage of the Church, than its great Law-giver JESUS CHRIST. Had this Cere-

‡ Lett. I. p. 61.

mony of Confirmation been really of great Advantage, and conducive to Holiness, it is very strange that neither CHRIST, nor his Apostles, should have ordained it. That it is an apostolic Institution, you have not so much as attempted to prove; unless Calvin's Conjecture must be admitted as Proof.

The Text usually urg'd for it, (*Acts viii. 14.*) I presume you are fully sensible has no Weight. Peter's and John's going down to Samaria to pray, and lay their Hands on those whom Philip had baptised, is, surely, no Precedent, no Direction, no Institution nor Command for our Bishops to do likewise. For the End for which the Apostles did it, 'tis expressly said (ver. 15, 17.) was, that they might receive the HOLY GHOST, i. e. its miraculous Gifts: and they pray'd for them, and laid their Hands on them, and they received the HOLY GHOST. That it was his miraculous Gifts (such as prophesying, speaking with Tongues, &c.) to form them into a Church, cannot be disputed: because, they were something visible, and obvious to Sense; something which struck the Wonder and Ambition of the wicked Sorcerer; for 'tis said, when SIMON saw that thro' Laying on of the Apostles Hands the HOLY GHOST was given, he offered them Money.-- Besides, as Dr. Whitby justly observes, if they laid not their Hands on all who were baptised, it makes nothing for Confirmation; if they did, then Simon Magus also was confirmed, and received the Holy Ghost; which you will by no Means admit.

It was to give then to the newly baptised Converts at Samaria the miraculous Gifts of the Holy Ghost, that Peter and John went and laid their Hands on them. But do our Bishops, Sir, pretend that, by their Praying and Laying on of Hands, the HOLY GHOST is given? Do they not disclaim any Powers of this kind? Seeing then they make no Pretensions to the End, why with such Solemnity do we see them practising the Means? Might they not as well stretch themselves upon the dead

dead Body of a Child, in Imitation of *Elisba*; or, make Ointment with Spittle for the Cure of the Blind, in Imitation of *our Saviour*; or, anoint the Sick with Oil, in Imitation of the *apostolic Elders*; as pray and lay their Hands on those who were baptised, in Imitation of *Peter* and *John*, who did this to the *Samaritan Converts ONLY*, that they might *receive* the miraculous Gifts and Powers of the *Holy Ghost*?

“ As for the open and solemn Renewal of the baptismal Covenant before God and many Witnesses, which, you say, baptised Persons ought to make, when they come to Years of Discretion :” This they make with us, in the *other Sacrament* of the Supper; which *Christ* himself has appointed, and which is the *only* Institution his Wisdom has thought fit to appoint, for this Purpose.

But if you will suffer me to *speake freely*, Sir, this Ceremony of *Confirmation*, as 'tis at present appointed and practised in your Church, to me appears so far from being *greatly conducive to Holiness of Life*, as that I wish it may not be conducive to a quite different, and a noxious Effect; even to *cherish* in Men's Minds a *presumptuous and false Hope*; and to *delude* them into *wrong Notions* as to the Safety of their State, and as to the *Terms of Acceptance and Favour with God*.

By the Order of your *Common-Prayer*, “ *ALL Persons baptised, when they come to competent Years, and are able to say the Lord's Prayer, Creed, and Ten Commandments, and the Answers of the short Catechism, are to be brought to Confirmation.*” The Bishop having asked, “ *Whether they renew the solemn Promise and Vow which was made in their Names in Baptism,*” &c. Upon their Answer, *we do*, proceeds hereupon to declare in the most solemn manner, even in an *Address to God* himself, *that he has vouchsafed to regenerate these his Servants by Water and the HOLY-GHOST* (note: not by *Water only*, but also by the *HOLY-GHOST*) and to give

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them the Forgiveness of ALL THEIR SINS : and laying his Hand upon the Head of each particular Person, he CERTIFIES him by that Sign of GOD's Favour and gracious Goodness towards him.

I pray you, Sir, in the Name of GOD, inform me, what Warrant has the Bishop to pronounce a Man's Sins ALL forgiven, and himself regenerated by the HOLY-GHOST, upon no other Grounds than his being able to say the short Catechism, and declaring that he stands by his baptismal Engagements? Will you say that this is the Christian Doctrine concerning the Terms of Acceptance and Forgiveness with GOD? Are good Vows and Resolutions, declared in the Church, infallible or proper Proofs of a Regeneration by the Holy Ghost? Is a Man's professing that he repents, and promising that he will live godly, that actual Repentance and Amendment of Life which alone can ensure the divine Pardon and Favour: Are there not Multitudes who call CHRIST their LORD, and publicly profess to stand by their baptismal Covenant, whom yet he will reject with Abhorrence at last? You will inform me then, Sir, how his Lordship, upon this meer Profession and Promise, presumes to declare to Almighty GOD, and to ASSURE the Person, that he is regenerated, forgiven, and without all Peradventure in a State of Favour with Heaven!

The Expressions, you must acknowledge, are couch'd in absolute and strong Terms: nor do I find that there is any Intimation, that their Forgiveness depends upon their Care to keep and to live up to, their baptismal Engagements. No; but tho' their whole Life hath hitherto been scandalously corrupt; yet upon their being able to say the Lord's Prayer, &c. the Bishop solemnly pronounces a most absolute Pardon over them; appeals to Almighty GOD that he hath forgiven them all their Sins; and lest this should be too little to satisfy the doubting Sinner, and quash his upbraiding Conscience, He lays his Hand upon his Head, and CERTIFIES him by THAT SIGN of God's Favour and Goodness to him. This

This *Bishop*, Sir, the Multitudes, who come to be confirm'd, are taught to consider as an *Ambassador* of CHRIST, a *Successor* of the Apostles, and a *special Minister* of GOD: when they hear then, this *sacred Person*, so solemnly declaring that they are fully justified, pardoned, and regenerated by the *Holy-Ghost*, can you blame them if they *believe it*? and rest satisfied that their Souls are in a *safe and happy State*? And as full Remission of Sins, and the Favour of GOD, are to be had on such *easy Terms*; can you wonder, should you see thousands eagerly flocking from all Quarters to accept it? Or that Persons of very vile and profligate Characters should often thrust themselves in to partake of this Benefit; and be seen receiving upon their Knees *episcopal* Absolution, and *solemn Assurances* of God's Favour and Grace?

You know the Aptness of Mankind, Sir, to deceive themselves with *false Hopes*; and to substitute good Purposes, Professions, and Vows in the Place of real Repentance and Amendment of Life; and you know this, Sir, (and have no doubt often declared it from your Pulpit) to be one of the *chief Hindrances* of Men's becoming truly good. Now should your Office for *Confirmation* be found thus powerfully and directly tending to *cherish* these false Hopes; you must excuse me if I then should think it so far from *conducting to Holiness of Life*, as that in my Conscience I should believe it to be rather *greatly OBSTRUCTIVE* to it; and extremely *delusive* and *injurious* to the Souls of Men.

Let me further ask you, Sir, on this Head--- Is it any Breach of Charity, to suppose that amongst the *vast Crouds* which present themselves on such Occasions, there are often *many*, whom GOD, who knows their Hearts, knows to be Persons of a corrupt and wicked Mind, and to be still under the Power and Tyranny of Sin? Can the *good Bishop* himself, in any Judgment of Charity, suppose there are not *some* such amongst the *Thousands* he confirms? Candidly tell me then, Sir,

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upon what Grounds he *absolutely* and *without Reserve*, declares to the *eternal God* concerning them ALL, that he hath *fully forgiven these his Servants*, when God at that Time knows many of them *not* to be his Servants, and that he hath not at all forgiven them? Or, lays his Hand on *each individual* Person to assure him of God's *Favour*, and of his *Regeneration by the HOLY-GHOST*; when, in Truth, some of those he thus assures are absolute and entire *Strangers* to the renewing Influences of God's *Spirit*, and fast bound in their Sins? To me, Sir, I assure, you, this appears, I do not say a very shocking, but I must say a very unaccountable Solemnity; and should be glad to know how to reconcile it to the *Reverence* you owe to God; or to the Faithfulness and Charity due to the *Souls* of Men.

Near akin to *this*, but of a yet more obnoxious Nature, is another Office of your *Common-Prayer*. The *Absolution of the Sick*. To *this* you know, Sir, *Dissenters* have always strongly objected, as too much resembling the *solemn Tricks* of the Church of *Rome*; by which they pretend to send Men to Heaven, without real Amendment and Holiness of Life. But *this* you very prudently pass over in *perfect Silence*; for what indeed could so ingenious an Advocate offer, on ~~so~~ extremely absurd and indefensible a Point?

Being come to the *sick Person*, (no Matter *what* or *how wicked* his former Life hath been) the *Priest* is directed, after some pious Exhortations, to examine
 “ *Whether he believes the Articles of the Apostles Creed;*
 “ *and truly repent him of his Sins; and be in Charity with*
 “ *all the World: And to move him to make a special Con-*
 “ *fession of his Sins, if he feels his Conscience troubled with*
 “ *any weighty Matters.*” After which Confession, the Priest is order'd to ABSOLVE him (if he humbly and heartily desire it) *after this sort*.

Our LORD JESUS CHRIST, who hath left Power to his Church to absolve all Sinners who truly repent and believe
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in him, of his great Mercy forgive thee thine Offences : And by the AUTHORITY committed to me, I ABSOLVE thee from ALL THY SINS, in the Name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY-GHOST. Amen.

The Form is extreamly solemn, Sir, and the Matter of the last Importance. You had need therefore be sure you go upon good Grounds, lest you be found to trifle with the *Name of God*, and in Things of *everlasting Moment*, and to acquit those whom he abhors. Permit me, Sir, in this *great Name*, and before the World, to demand of you,

1. *What Church is it, and where is the Church found, to whom CHRIST has left this high Authority and Power? Is it the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, the Church of France, or the Church of Rome? Do you here mean by the Church, what your XIXth Article hath defined it, viz. The Congregation of the Faithful? ---- Or, do you understand it as in your XXth Article, where it is said to have Power to decree Rites, and Authority in Matters of Faith? If so, I have shewn in my former Letter, that the Church is no other than the King and Parliament of these Realms. The King, indeed, has Power to absolve all manner of Sinners, penitent or not penitent; and by a single Act of Grace, to vacate and set aside the Censures and Excommunications of all the Bishops, Archbishops, and Clergy of the Land, and to restore the Offender to the Church's Bosom again. To absolve, not in Foro Civili only, but in Foro Ecclesiae; not in the State only, but also in the Church. But whether the Kings or Queens of England do this by Authority derived to them from CHRIST! Whether that Church of which THEY are declared the supreme Heads, be the Church to whom this high Power is given! And whether THEY, as Heads of it have not this Power dwelling capitally, supremely, and principally in them; so as that, what THEY loose on Earth, is as certainly loosed in Heaven, as any Thing that is loosed by any inferior*

Member

Members who officiate in the Church under them --- These, Sir, are high Points, which without your Assistance, I shall not presume to settle. Be so good, Sir, as to let us know, WHAT CHURCH upon Earth it is, to whom CHRIST hath delegated this *important* AUTHORITY; and WHERE the *Charter* or *Grant* is found, by which he gave it the Commission? But

2. That CHRIST hath given, can give, no such *Authority* to *fallible uninspired* Men, I should think absolutely out of doubt. Because if he had given *Power* to any *AUTHORITATIVELY* to *absolve those who are truly penitent*, he must also have given them *Power* TO KNOW, who are *truly penitent* : Else 'tis a *Power* to do nothing, for till they *know* them to be *truly penitent* (*i. e.* till they can *search their Hearts*) they cannot *authoritatively* absolve them: But if they cannot do it till *then*, they cannot do it at all. Besides,

3. If the *Priest* has really from CHRIST this *Authority* and *Power*, the *Manner* in which he is here ordered to apply it, is most certainly *wrong*. For upon the Sinner's *confessing* his Faults, and *professing* his Faith and sincere Repentance, the Priest is ordered most *solemnly* and *authoritatively* to absolve him. But are any Promises or Professions which a Sinner makes in that Distress, a *proper Ground* for such an absolute authoritative Absolution? Are not the most profligate, when *Death* is thought to approach, wont to feel their Conscience troubled with many *weighty Matters*, ready to confess their Sins, to express the deepest Remorse, and to vow Amendment if spared? But when the Danger is past, is there one of a Thousand that remembers his Vows, and that returns not to his Sins with as keen an Appetite as ever? Do not you, Gentlemen of the *Clergy*, loudly complain of this, when you press to *present* Repentance, and warn us not to trust to the Sorrows of a Sick Bed? But notwithstanding all this, when the *Sick Sinner* sends for you, confesses his Sins, professes

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Repentance,

Repentance, and desires Absolution, you are directed and required with all possible Solemnity, even in the *Name of the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, authoritatively to absolve him from ALL his Crimes*, how many or great soever they have been, and to declare him *fully forgiven*. Strange! That you can presume in the Name of the *sacred Trinity*, to ASSURE a Man that he is *absolved* from all his Sins, when at the same Time you *know* yourselves NOT SURE that he is absolved! Yea, when the *only Grounds* of your doing it, are but the same *Signs of Repentance* which a thousand Sinners give, who are nevertheless held fast under the Power and Guilt of Sin! What would you call that Man, Sir, who in a Court of human Judicature, should *most solemnly* affirm, and declare in the *Name of God*, an *important Fact* to be done, which yet at the same Time he is *not sure* is done; or who should call Heaven to witness to the *certainty* of that, which he is *not at all* certain of? But is it less dangerous, or less reproachful, thus to trifle and collude in *eternal* Things than in *temporal*; in the Court of *Almighty God*, than in that of the *King*?

I cannot say, Sir, in what Light you view this Order of your Church, nor what Obedience you pay it, but am humbly of Opinion, that 'tis *straining* the *sacerdotal* Character, which has sunk it into some Contempt; and that if it continues thus *strained*, lower, much lower, 'twill continue to sink. For when Men see you claiming from God, *awful* and *high* Powers, which they are sure God has never given you; and hear you with great Solemnity *authoritatively* absolving in the Name of the *Holy Trinity*; when at the same Time they know the *Holy Trinity* never gave you *any Authority* so to do, how natural is it for them to deride the *priestly Character* on which these Claims are founded, and to treat your other Offices with Ridicule and Disrespect?

And now, Sir, having presented you with some of the *true Grounds* of our dissent, many of which you have

not

not at all, and the rest but slightly touched, in your three long Letters, I proceed to your Attempts to *reflect back* our own Pleas and Objections upon ourselves, and to prove us *self-condemned*.

Here you complain ---- "that you walk almost without Light ---- that our Churches are so secret in all their Ways, that there is scarce any knowing what they are ---- that you must grope and feel for them as in the Dark ---- and that you are something like one fighting with a Ghost *." This seems, indeed, a very just Description of your Case, for you greatly misrepresent both our *Principles* and our *Practice*. But the Blame of *this Darkness*, Sir, be wholly to yourself. Are not our Churches *open*? Our Prayers, our Sermons, our Sacraments and Ordinations performed in View of the World, that whoever pleases may come and see our Manner in them?

But "we have no common Rules of Discipline and Worship, by which we hold ourselves obliged to walk; at least none made public and laid before the World, for your Examination and Discussion †." Yes, Sir, we have an excellent COMMON RULE of *Discipline and Worship*, by which all our Churches hold themselves obliged to walk, even the same which CHRIST and his *Apostles*, the great Founders of the *Christian Church*, originally drew up, published, and established for it; and which they left as a *common Rule*, the ONLY common Rule, and a PERFECT common Rule, for the Use of all future Ages, viz. the HOLY SCRIPTURES: This therefore you may discuss with all the Freedom you please.

But to descend to some of the many Instances in which you much *misrepresent* us. Your very great Mistake, as to our *imposing* SITTING at the *Lord's-supper*, I have shewn in my former Letter. You farther as-

* Lett. II. pag. 4. † Ibid.

firm ---- " That it is *generally* held amongst us, that the
 " Sacrament is for none but *perfect* and *consummate* Chris-
 " tians, such as can give a particular Account of their
 " Conversion *." Here you *walk*, Sir, *without Light*.
 There is not a *single Church*, I am persuaded, amongst
 the *Dissenters* in the whole Kingdom, hardly a *single*
Person, who hath *this Notion* of the Sacrament. We
universally hold, that *every* sincere Christian has a Right
 to the *Lord's-Table*.

" As to the Duty of *Fasting*, you say, if you are not
 " *mightily deceived*, it is thrown away amongst us. You
 " have not met with any Sermons or Treatises of our
 " Ministers, shewing the Obligations, and pressing its
 " Practice upon the People; nor have you ever heard
 " of its being practised, even by the strictest and de-
 " voutest amongst us†." You are *mightily deceived*, Sir,
 a great deal *too mightily*, for one who sets up for so severe
 a *Censor* of his Brethren. Amongst many others, I refer
 you only to a most excellent Discourse on *Fasting*,
 in *Bennet's Christian Oratory*, Vol. II. which I am sure
 you cannot read without admiring it, blushing, and
 condemning your own Temerity.

You are pleased to give us also a very *grave* and
severe Reprehension for *Standing*, and not *Kneeling* at
 our publick Prayers; and say, " It is little less than
 " *imposed* upon our People, insomuch that should any
 " one *presume* to kneel in our Churches, we should cer-
 " tainly censure and condemn him for it ‡. ---- That
 " *your Church* has as good Right to impose *Kneeling* in
 " the public Worship upon her Members, as *Dissenters*
 " have to *impose* it upon their Children and Servants in
 " their *Family Devotions* §. ---- And that WE ALWAYS
 " practise it in *private* **." You are extremely unhap-
 py, Sir, in your Intelligence about this *strange* People,

* Lett. I. pag. 52. † Lett. I. pag. 65, 66. ‡ Lett.
 II. pag. 65, 67. § Lett. I. pag. 28. ** Lett. II. pag. 68.

whom you have taken upon you to *reprehend*. How came you to know, what their Posture of Worship *always* is in PRIVATE? Have they taken you into their *Closets*? For my own Part, I pretend not to have been much with them at their secret Devotions, and therefore will not *pronounce* with *such Assurances* as you do upon the Point; but am very strongly persuaded they practice *variously* in this Matter, and do not *always* kneel.

As to their *Families* and *Churches*, tho' I have been present at *Prayers* in a great Number of both (which you, I presume, Sir, never have been) I assure you, I never once saw nor heard any Thing like the *Impositions* you mention. In their *Family* Devotions some *stand*, and some *kneel*, according as their Inclination and Convenience serves. And in their *public Assemblies* many kneel at Prayer, I believe, the whole Kingdom over, without it ever entering into the Thoughts of their *Fellow-Worshippers*, to take the least Offence thereat.

You tell me "you can name a considerable Congregation amongst us, which is greatly scandalized---" and has taken a great and general Offence, at one "of its Members kneeling at public Prayer *." But as in many other Points, Sir, 'tis very *notorious* you have been *ill served* by your *Informers*, as to our Customs and Worship; you must give me leave to think, that they have *here* also made *too free* with your Credulity. That we have *weak* Brethren amongst us, and those not a few, I am very ready to own. But a Congregation, a *considerable* Congregation too, so weak as to take a *great* and *general* Offence at such a Trifle as this! You must excuse me, if I cannot easily admit it. I think you will do Justice, Sir, to *name* the Congregation, that it may either *purge* itself of the Reproach, to stand *corrected* before the World, for its *unchristian* and *imposing* Temper; and learn to act more consistent with that *Liberty* and *Right* of private Judgment, which as *Dis-*

* Lett. II. pag. 68.

senters they profess. No, Sir, *Dissenters* are not for *binding*, where GOD has *left free*. They are our *Brethren* of another Church, who think themselves capable of *mending* CHRIST's *Institutions*; and not content to use them in the *plainness* and *simplicity* in which DIVINE WISDOM left them, must needs *embellish* and *improve* them by *Additions* of their own.

These *Additions* of your own, for Instance, KNEELING at public Prayers, you are so surprizingly *sanguine* as to represent as, “ a great *Improvement* of public “ *Worship*, and as adding a *natural Splendor* and *Beauty* “ to it ---- that our *Worship* is *debased* for Want of “ it ---- that *kneeling* is a *more* humble and honourable “ *Posture* ---- *much more* expressive of our profound Re- “ *verence* of God. ---- And the humble *Posture* of “ *kneeling*, NATURE itself so plainly dictates, and so “ powerfully prompts us to, that a Man, if he were “ left to himself, whenever ---- he makes his Requests “ known to GOD, will hardly do it in any other ---- “ unless when some *affected Restraint* is laid upon him. †” How towering a Flight! You do not pretend to say, that either CHRIST or his *Apostles*, ever enjoined, or constantly, or mostly, *used* KNEELING at public Prayer; you mention several Instances from *Scripture*, where STANDING was the *Posture* of some of the *most solemn* *Addresses* to *Almighty GOD* ---- *Abraham* STOOD before the Lord ‡, when he offered up that humble *Intercession* for *Sodom*. Of the *Levites* and all the *Priests*, 'tis particularly recorded, that they *stood up*; and all the *People* are also called upon to *stand up*, and *bless* the Lord their GOD, in that solemn *Address* to Heaven, *Nehem.* ix. 2, 3, 4, 5. An *Address* of deep *Humiliation*, *Confession*, *Deprecation*, and *Covenanting* with GOD, one of the *most solemn* that stands upon sacred Record; 'tis here no less than *four* several Times expressly menti-

† Lett. II. pag. 66, 67, 69, 73. ‡ Gen. xviii. 22.

oned, that **STANDING** was the *Posture* in which their Worship was offered up. *Moses* and *Samuel* are represented as **STANDING** before **GOD**, when making their most humble and importunate Intercessions with him, *Jer.* xv. 1. When our **SAVIOUR** in his Parable represents two Men praying in the Temple, **STANDING** is the Posture in which he describes them, *Luke* xviii. 10, 11. Yea, himself in exprefs Words has, if not actually enjoined, yet most fully declared his *Approbation* of this Gesture, *Mark* xi. 25. *When ye STAND praying, forgive.* Finally, when the primitive Christians, it is acknowledged on all Hands, every Lord's Day, and at all other Times betwixt *Easter* and *Whitsuntide*, universally prayed **STANDING**, and NEVER *kneeled* at their public Devotions. (Consequently, by the Way, not at the *Lord's-supper.*) "*Die Dominico nefas ducimus, &c.* says *Tertullian**. On the **LORD'S-DAY** we account it a **SIN** to worship **KNEELING**; "*which Custom we also observe from Easter to Whitsuntide.*" ---- With all this Evidence glaring full in your Face, Sir, you have the *Assurance*, shall I call it, or does it deserve some other Name, very smartly to reprehend us for **STANDING** at our publick Prayers; and to call it a *Debasement of our Worship* ---- to affirm that *kneeling* is a *MORE humble and honourable Posture* ---- MUCH MORE expressive of our profound Reverence of **GOD** ---- A great IMPROVEMENT of public Worship, and that it adds a natural **BEAUTY** and **SPLENDOR** to it ---- Surprizingly enthusiastic! What *Abraham*, and *Moses*, and *Samuel*, and *Nehemiah*, and all the *Priests*, and *Jewish People*, **DEBASE** the divine Worship, when they **STOOD** before **GOD**, and made their solemn Addresses to him! Yea, what **CHRIST** himself too *debase* it, by directing Men to **STAND** praying!

Had you happened, Sir, to have been of the Council of the *Apostles*, you could have helped them to establish *Christian Worship* upon a greatly improved, a more beautiful and perfect Plan; and have **INJOIN'D** this *MORE humble*

* De Coron. Milit. pag. 340.

and honorable Posture, this ADDITIONAL Splendor and Beauty to public Prayer, which it never came into their Minds to INJOIN the Disciples.----But as our Bibles at present stand; and God and Jesus Christ have left us at full Liberty to offer up our Prayers either Standing or Kneeling, you will excuse us if we are not so struck with your additional Beauty as to give ourselves up blindfold to its Charms.

But it seems we are inconsistent, in condemning some of your Ceremonies, when at the same Time we readily conform ourselves to others: Yea, have many Ceremonies allow'd and practised among ourselves. "Such, you aver, we have, tho' we seem not to know it: Such as Uncovering our Head when we enter either your Churches, or our own Meetings†." But you are still "walking in the Dark," Sir, as you justly represent yourself, "and encountring with Ghosts." The Dissenters have no such Custom of Uncovering their Heads when they enter into their Meeting-Places, unless in Time of Worship; no Notion of paying Reverence to Timber and Walls; no Ministers amongst them who have Sense or Grace enough to consecrate a Piece of Ground: And when they use this Ceremony at Entering your Churches, 'tis, I assure you, purely as a civil, not at all a religious Ceremony; a Compliment paid, not in the least to the Building, but entirely to our good Brethren, whom we would not needlessly offend.

"Kneeling at Ordination," the next Ceremony you mention, tho' generally used amongst us, was never believe imposed. If the Person to be ordained scrupled that Posture, he would, without all Doubt, be permitted to stand.

As for "the secret Ceremonies which you suspect, but will not positively affirm, to pass at striking the Covenant betwixt us and our Pastors," which you once and again mention, let your Suspicions on that Head

Sir, give you no further Pain, I assure you I neither knew, nor have ever heard of any such *Covenanting* now practised amongst us: And am persuaded, that of all our Churches, not one in five Hundred observe any such Thing.

“ In Balance against your *Surplice*, you put, what you call, the Ceremony of our *long sweeping Cloak* §.” But the least Attention would have shewn the *two Cases* to be far from *parallel*. Our Ministers are at full Liberty either to *use* or *disuse* the *one*: Are yours *so* as to the *other*? Did you ever hear of any learned pious *Pastors* amongst us silenc’d, rejected, and cruelly imprison’d for refusing the *sweeping Cloak*? But, have you never heard of your *Hoopers, Sampsons, Humpherys*, and an hundred other Ministers, Men of distinguish’d Learning and Usefulness in *your Church*, who have been *swept* from their Stations in it; silenc’d, confined, and grievously harass’d, *only* for scrupling your *Surplice* and *Cap*? Have you never heard of *many Churches* forsaken, and shut up in *London*, and of numerous Congregations, both in City and Country, deprived for a long while of Sacraments and publick Worship, by the rigorous Imposition of your *Habits* on their *Ministers*? And if the most celebrated Divine was now to offer to officiate in any of your Churches, but refused to *wear a Surplice*, must he not, by your *Canons*, be set aside and refused? Had our *Cloak* been the Occasion of a thousandth Part of the Distractions and Confusions in the Church, as your *Surplice* has been, and *swept* so many worthy Persons from their Ministry and Livings in it; we should have had the Grace, I hope, soon to treat it as a *Besom of Destruction*, and to have doom’d it to the Flames.

But “ the Giving the *Christian Name* in Baptism to the Person baptised, you very seriously urge as another solid Argument of *Ceremonies* amongst us,” and ask, “ Is it not an *Addition* to the Sacrament? Is it

"not an *Imposition*?" You add, Now I see you smile.*
Excuse me, Sir, I could not help it! your Argument is quite new, and really surpris'd me with its Solidity and Weight. Yes, Sir, I own it an *Addition*, an *Imposition*, and a very *ridiculous* one too. And should any Minister of ours pretend to *add*, or to *impose*, this Ceremony upon his People; and forbid them to call the Child by *its Name* till it was baptis'd; you may be assur'd he would soon meet with the Disregard and Contempt his Impertinence deserved. When you baptise *adult* Persons, do you *give* their Names in that Ceremony? Or do you not *only* call them by Names *before* given? The same, I apprehend, is the Case as to *Children* amongst us.

As for the *Ceremonies in Marriage*; these, you justly observe, we consider only as *civil* Ceremonies, and the Priest as a *civil Officer*, appointed by the Magistrate to officiate in this Affair. And whatever *decent Rites* the Magistrate prescribes in Matters of a *civil Nature*, we think it our Duty reverently to observe. But, "the Magistrate prescribe!" You with Astonishment reply, "For God's Sake how does the Magistrate here prescribe the Rites and Ceremonies of *Marriage*, more than the *other* Rites and Ceremonies of the Church †!" But could not a Gentleman of your Discernment perceive a Difference here? Is the Form of *Marriage* any where *instituted* by our SAVIOUR; or a Part of *Christian Worship*; as Baptism and the Lord's Supper are? May we not therefore *own* the Power of the *civil Magistrate* to appoint *Rites* and *Forms* for the Celebration of the *one*, but not so as to the *other*? By prescribing Rites of *Marriage*, the Magistrate acts in his Character, and rules in *his own Kingdom*: But by *authoritatively* prescribing Rites in *Baptism* and the *Lord's Supper*, we humbly apprehend, he extends beyond the

* Lett. III. p. 10. † Lett. III. p. 6.

Sphere assign'd him by GOD, and attempts to rule in CHRIST's Kingdom; and that therefore here we are to obey GOD, rather than Man.

You further ask with surprize--- "What *civil Ceremonies* in the Church of GOD! in the midst of the "Administration of a divine Institution; intermix'd "with pastoral Exhortations, holy Prayers, solemn Benedictions.*---But why, Sir, so astonish'd? Did you never take an OATH in a civil Court of Judicature? And did not the Person who administred this SACRED Rite, give you a *pastoral Exhortation*, accompanied with an *holy Prayer*, and a *solemn Benediction*, piously invoking on you GOD's Blessing and Help? And as to the *Place*, which you call the *Church of God*, where *Marriage* is solemnized; you might have pleased to remember, that the *Consecration* of Timber, and the *Sanctity* of Walls, is a Point too sublime for *Dissenters* Understandings; and that in their Opinion all Places are alike holy, and that no Building on Earth merits the high Honour of being called the *Church of God*.

The same Reply we make as to the *Ceremonies of Burial*, our Compliance with which you also briskly report upon us. Is *Burial of the Dead*, Sir, a CHRISTIAN Institution? Any Part of the Religion or Worship of Christ? Is it not purely a *political* or *civil* Thing? Yes; and as such *only* we view it: and consider the Person who officiates, as one appointed to this Office, directed, instructed, and maintained by the STATE.

But as you are here professedly "answering our great and popular Objections," how came you, Sir, to slide over in consummate Silence, one of the *greatest* and *most* popular, to this *Office of Burial*? which, indeed, is not *ours* only, but an Objection of some of the most illustrious Members of your own Church. Were you conscious the *objected Passages* were incapable of Defence, and therefore prudently let them drop?

* Lett. III. p. 6.

There are but *three Cases*, you know, Sir, in which your Church *refuses* this solemn *Office of Burial*, viz. to those who die unbaptised, to Self-Murderers, and to those who are under Sentence of the greater Excommunication. As for *all other Persons* which are brought to the Church-Yard, it very strictly *commands* you, even under Pain of *Suspension*, by Canon 68, that you use over them the Form prescrib'd by the *Common-Prayer*. Now, hence it comes to pass, that over some of the most abandoned and *profligate* of Mankind; over Men who have been cut down in a Course of open Impiety by a sudden and untimely Death; or who even fell by the Hand of *Justice* for some black and atrocious Crime; over *these*, I say, your Church, and I say it with Astonishment, directs and commands you most solemnly to declare, *That almighty God of his GREAT MERCY has taken to himself the Soul of this your dear Brother*. You give God hearty Thanks that it hath pleased him to deliver him out of the Miseries of this sinful World: And you pray God, that when you yourselves shall depart out of this Life, you may REST IN CHRIST, as your Hope is this your Brother doth. This is what your Church commands you solemnly to say over EVERY Person brought to be buried, the *three Cases* above excepted. So that if the Man happen'd to be killed in the very Act of committing Murder, Adultery, or a Rape: Or for either of these Crimes dies upon the Gallows an impenitent hardened Wretch, whom Vengeance suffer'd not to live; yet concerning him you are to declare, that *Almighty God hath in GREAT MERCY taken him to himself*; Tho' he died a Victim to public Justice, and was taken away in Wrath. You are to give God hearty Thanks, that he hath taken this your Brother out of the Miseries of this sinful World: Tho' you have the strongest Reasons to believe, that he is gone down to Realms of greater Misery below. And you are to profess before God, that you Hope the Man RESTS IN CHRIST, and pray that you yourselves may rest

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in Christ in the same Manner as this your Brother doth ; when you have all the Grounds in the World to think he *died in his Sins*, and is therefore not gone to be *with Christ*, where nothing that is defiled can ever be admitted. Strange ! and extremely shocking ! what can the People think, Sir ! what must *Infidels* and *Deists* think ! when they hear you in the Morning denouncing from the *Scriptures* certain Death and Destruction from the *Presence of God*, to all vicious and corrupt Persons ; and assuring them that *without Holiness* NO MAN shall see the Lord : But in the Evening from the *Common Prayer*, shall hear YOU, the SAME PERSON, declaring before GOD, your HOPE of the *eternal Happiness* of one of the most debauch'd and profligate Men your Parish affords ; and sending him hence with all the lofty Expressions of Confidence and Hope, as you would a Person of the most shining and exemplary Life.

Do you imagine, Sir, People do not think ? Can you wonder DEISM prevails ? That the *Priesthood* is ridiculed ? And that your *good Sermons* are no more effectual to reform a corrupt World ? To me this appears (and doubtless it does the same to thousands of your own Church) a most indecent Prostitution of your *sacred Character* and Office ; a Trifling and Prevarication in Things of everlasting Moment ; and a fatal Snare to the Souls of Men : Who seeing their debauch'd Neighbour dismiss'd to the other World with such *Confidence* of his good Estate, suppress their just Fears, and say, *I shall have Peace, tho' I add Drunkenness to Thirst.*

But there is a further very *strange* and *extraordinary* Circumstance attending this Matter, viz. That it makes your Church perform, not to say a *Miracle*, but something very like it, if not greater than that, for it *damns* and *saves* the same individual Persons. Whom it damns when *living*, it saves when *dead*. *Arians* and *Socinians*, you know, Sir, your Church declares WITHOUT DOUBT to *perish everlastingly*. But let these very Men die, and your

your Church as solemnly declares that God *bath in GREAT MERCY taken them to himself*, and that it *HOPES they REST IN CHRIST*. Can any Thing be more transcendant and marvellous than this ! That the Man whom I pronounce WITHOUT DOUBT *to be damned*, I yet HOPE *that he is saved, i. e. I hope without Hope*.

But you would establish, not only the *Use*, but the Church's *divine Right*, of MAKING Ceremonies from the Instance of the *holy Kifs* †. “ The *Kifs of Charity* “ used in the Apostolic Church, you ask, was it a Rite “ of divine Appointment, or was it not ? ” I answer you, that I apprehend this Kifs of Charity cannot properly be called *a divine Institution*, nor be said to be *ordained* by the Apostles. The greeting with a Kifs, was an ancient established Use, not only amongst the *Jews*, but the *Gentile Nations* also. This Usage therefore, or Ceremony, was not ordained by the Apostles, but only by their Advice regulated and directed to a moral and religious End. 'Tis as if they had said, 'Tis your Custom when you meet, to salute each other with a Kifs, see that it be a pure, a chaste, or holy Kifs, a Token of unfeigned Charity, Friendship and Peace.

“ But if this Ceremony of the *holy Kifs*, was *not* of “ divine Appointment “ (which probably, you say, is “ the Truth of the Case) but a merely ecclesiastical “ prudential Institution, *ordained* by the Apostles with- “ out any Precept from the Lord, or any particular “ Direction of the *Holy Spirit* ; ” ---- Then, Sir, I with- out the least Hesitation say, it was not at all obligatory as a *Law* upon the Consciences of *Christians* ; they might, or they might not practise it, without sinning against God. Even the *Apostles* had *no Dominion* over the Faith and Practise of *Christians*, but what was given them by the *special Presence* and Spirit of CHRIST, the *only Law* giver, Lord, and Sovereign of the Church. They were

to teach only Things which he should command them. Whatever they *injoined* under the Influence of *that* SPIRIT, was to be considered and obeyed as the *Injunction* of CHRIST. But if they *injoined* any Thing in the Church (which I can by no Means admit) *without* the peculiar Influence and Direction of *this Spirit*; (*i. e.* as merely fallible unassisted Men) in that Case their Injunctions had *no Authority* over Conscience: Every Man's *own Reason* had Authority to examine and discuss their Injunctions, and as they approved themselves to his *private Judgment*, to observe them or not. Should we grant then what you ask ---- "That the Church in the present Age, has the same Authority and Power as the Church in the apostolic Age, considered as not being under any immediate and extraordinary Guidance of the Holy Ghost." ---- What will you gain by it? This same Authority and Power, is you see, Sir, really *no Power nor Authority at all.*

I proceed next "to the Point of DISCIPLINE, the Want of which you say, is objected to *your Church*; but you will represent the real State of it, and then shew that *we* really as much want it *ourselves* *". We will attend *your own* Account of it, which to be sure is not too severe. You acknowledge "that the *Discipline* of the Church is of *great Moment* towards the Edification of its Members; and that the Fault is *unpardonable* when Church Governors let it fall, through a supine Carelessness and Neglect ---- That there is a great Prostration of Discipline in the Church of *England* ---- That it is ruined amongst you ---- That the Distempers of the Times are evidently too strong for it ---- That those who sit at the Helm, find it prudent not to bear up too much against the Impetuosity of the Storm, but to give Way till the Madness of the People be still ---- That the Discipline of the Church has not been carried to any Degree

* Lett. III. pag. 12.

“ of Perfection ---- And now lies under a *general Relaxation*. ---- That your People are often indulg'd in
 “ all their unreasonable Demands and disorderly Ways,
 “ to prevent their putting in Execution their Threats,
 “ *that they will go to the Meeting* ---- And finally, That
 “ you have at least, the Shadow and Form of *Discipline*, and trust in God that *these dry Bones will one*
 “ *Day live* †.”

This, it must be owned, is very ingenuously and frankly spoken. And can you blame then the *Dissenters*, Sir, for joining themselves to *Churches*, where that *godly Discipline* is observed, which you confess to be of so great Moment to *the Edification* of Christian People; and which your Church is *continually wishing*, but never attempts *to have restored*? But here you *retort*, and intimate *as great a Want of Discipline* amongst us.
 “ What are there no scandalous Sinners, you ask §,
 “ no Fornicators, Adulterers, Extortioners, &c. received into your Churches! I must beg your Pardon
 “ if I demur upon this. For I could never perceive
 “ the Doors of the Meeting were ever shut against
 “ any. And if such profligate Persons be not admitted
 “ to *sit at the Lord's Table*, they need not fear being
 “ admitted to all other Parts of your Worship.”

And is not this, Sir, exactly right? Ought not our Church-Doors to be always *kept open*, that whoever will may come, and be Witness to our Way of Worship. Such *profligate* Persons therefore may come, if they please, and hear their Sins *reproved*, and be *exhorted* to Repentance and Amendment of Life. They are *then*, where they ought to be, under the preaching of the Word; the *Means* appointed by God, to convince and reclaim the profligate and corrupt. Were not *the Doors* of the Church of *Corinth* kept open in the *Apostle's Days*, for *Infidels* to come in, and be *present at their Worship*.

† Lett. III. pag. 12, 13, 14, 17, 22, 28. § Lett. III. pag. 23.
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Vid. 1 *Cor.* xiv. 23. But to the *Table of the LORD*, to partake of the *Children's Bread*, you seem convinced that in *our Churches*, such profligate Persons are not suffered to come. And is not this the *true Order and Discipline* of the Christian Church? But---- Is it the same, Sir, in *your Church*? Are not some of the most profane and abandoned of Men, Rakes, Debauchees, Blasphemers of God, and Scoffers at all Religion, often seen upon their Knees around *your Communion Table*, eating the *Children's Bread*, and partaking of the *holy Elements* to qualify for a *Post*? Dare your Ministers refuse them! No, they dare not refuse the most impious *Blasphemer* the *three Kingdoms* afford, when he comes to demand it as a Qualification for an Office in the Army or Fleet.

And if in any *other Case*, the Priest denies the Sacrament to the most *infamous* Sinner dwelling in his Parish, if the Man, upon an Appeal to the *ecclesiastical Court*, can secure the Favour of the *Lay-Chancellor*, he may securely defy both the Minister and the Bishop to keep him from the Lord's Table. The *Chancellor's* Determination shall stand in Law, though contrary to the *Bishop's*; and the Minister be liable to a *Suspension*, for refusing Compliance; and if he is contumacious, and will not give the Man the Sacrament, even to *Excommunication* itself. How, Sir, do you reconcile this with your affirming, "That your *Parish Priest* has as much
 " Power as any *Presbyterian* or *congregational Minister*
 " to repel open and scandalous Sinners from the Lord's
 " Table?" † Or how with your "Representing the
 " *Lay-Chancellor* as a Person *only assumed* by the Bishop,
 " not to do any Act that is *purely spiritual*, but only
 " to be his *Assistant* in his ecclesiastical and judicial
 " Proceedings ‡?"

Is not the Chancellor *supreme* and *uncontrouled* in his Court, not liable to be restrained or directed by the Bi-

† *Lett.* III. p. 33.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 38.

shop in his *judicial Proceedings* ? Does he not *finally* and *absolutely* determine on Cases of *Excommunication*, *sovereignly direct* who shall be *received* to, and who *cast out* from Christian Fellowship and Worship at the *Table of the Lord* ? And is not *this* an Act as *purely spiritual*, as important and momentous, as any done in the Church ? Must not *his Sentence* take Place without Controul, and is the *Minister* in publishing it any other than *his Servant*, appointed by Law to put it in Execution ?

Will you please to hear, Sir, the Sentiments of a great *Prelate* * of your Church, upon the Point in Debate. . .

“ If there be any Thing in the Office of a Bishop to be chal-
 “ langed *peculiar* to themselves, certainly it should be
 “ this (speaking of *Excommunication*) yet this is in a
 “ Manner quite relinquished to their *Chancellors* ; Lay-
 “ men, who have no more Capacity to sentence or ab-
 “ solve a Sinner, than to dissolve the Heavens or the
 “ Earth. And this pretended Power of the Chancellor,
 “ is sometimes purchased with a Sum of Money. *Their*
 “ *Money perish with them* ! Good God ! what a horrid
 “ Abuse is this of the divine Authority ? But this no-
 “ torious Transgression is excused, as they think, by
 “ this, that a Minister called the *Bishop's Surrogate*, but
 “ is indeed the *Chancellor's Servant*, chosen, called, and
 “ placed there by him, to be his Crier in the Court,
 “ no better ; that when he hath examined, heard and
 “ sentenced the Cause, then the Minister, forsooth,
 “ pronounces the Sentence. Just as if the Rector of
 “ a Parish Church should exclude any of his Congre-
 “ gation, and lock him out of the Church, then comes
 “ the Clerk, shews and jingles the Keys, that all may
 “ take Notice that he is excluded. And by this his
 “ Authority, the *Chancellor* takes upon him to sentence
 “ not only *Laymen*, but *Clergymen* also brought into his

* *Dr. Cross, Bishop of Hereford, Naked Truth, &c.*
 pag. 58.

" Court for any Delinquency. And in the Court of
 " *Arches*, they sentence even *Bishops* themselves."

" I remember when the Bishop of *Wells*, hearing of a
 " Cause corruptly managed, and coming into Court to rec-
 " tify it, the Chancellor Dr. *Duck* fairly and mannerly bid
 " him *be gone*, for he had no Power there to act any
 " Thing; and therewithal pulled out his Patent, seal-
 " ed by this Bishop's Predecessor, which frightened the
 " poor Bishop out of the Court."---Behold! this is the
 Person, Sir, whom you have the Courage to represent
 as *only assumed by the Bishop, not to do any Act that is purely*
 SPIRITUAL, *but ONLY to be his ASSISTANT in his judicial*
Proceedings.

But as we are now upon the Head of *Discipline*, and
 the Law called the TEST is a Battery which has beat
 down *all its Fences* around your Church, and you are a
 zealous Advocate for that LAW, you will permit me here,
 Sir, to enlarge a little upon *that Point*: And to ask---
 How you can *bear* to see the terrible Desolation it has
 made of your *godly Discipline*, without Resentment and
 Grief? Can you be jealous, Sir, for the Prosperity and
 Honour of your Church, and yet *patiently* view it lying
 in this *polluted* and *common* State? Its Inclosures broken
 up, and a Way opened by Law for the most flagitious
 of Men, for *Atheists*, professed *Deists*, and the most *open*
 and *avowed* Sinners, to lie securely in its Bosom, to suck
 at its Breasts, to be numbered and cherished amongst
 its holiest and most beloved Children, and to be ac-
 knowledged before the World as honest and good *Chri-*
stians, by being *suffered* to come boldly to the *Table of*
the LORD.

But why do I say *suffered*? Does not your Church
 by the Force of this Law, even *compel them to come in*?
 Many of the unhappy Persons, conscious of their *un-*
fitness, would gladly *draw back*: Knowing themselves
 perhaps, either to *disbelieve* the Truth, or else to *live in*
open Violence of the Laws of *Christianity*, they are loth
 to

to add to their other Crimes this *Prevarication* with Almighty God, and Affront to JESUS CHRIST, and thereby to run a dreadful Risque of *eating and drinking Judgment to themselves*. But, their *All* lies at Stake: They must *qualify*, or be given up to Beggary and Want. Away therefore with *Scruples*! They rush to the Lord's Table, and partake of the *sacred Elements* with Consciences and Characters all covered with Guilt.

You will say, perhaps, it is their own Fault, they might have *refused* to come. They might, indeed, if they would have lost their Posts, their Subsistence, their Bread.---- But can *the Church* reasonably expect such Sacrifices as these, from Men of corrupt Minds? Is *she* then in *no Fault*, in laying Men under such strong, almost *invincible* Temptations, to this odious Hypocrisy and Profanation of *holy Things*? Is she not highly culpable, for opening her Bosom to receive Men of *impure Characters* to all the *sacred Privileges, Liberties, and Honours*, which belong only to *sincere Christians*? Yea, for owning before the World as worthy and good Christians, *Persons* whom the *World* sees, and whom *the Church* herself cannot but see to blaspheme the Name of CHRIST, and to live in avowed Contempt of his Authority and Laws?

And what Relief, Sir, has the unhappy Minister, of whom as *Steward in God's House*, it is required that he be found FAITHFUL, and who is to answer for his Conduct to his great MASTER hereafter? What Relief, I ask, has he, when the most *veteran Debauchee*, shall come and demand from him *these Pledges* of Christian Fellowship, and of God's paternal Love? Truly, none at all: He must receive him as a Child of God, and a dearly beloved Brother to the *Table of CHRIST*, or have an *Action* commenced against him, and be condemned perhaps in Damages more than he is worth.

As much therefore as you are concerned for the Honour of *the Church*, and for the Interest, Reputation, and

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and Comfort of its *Clergy*, so much you ought to wish and zealously promote the Repeal of *this Law*. A Law, which whatever was its original Intention, hath in its Application, let in like a *Floodgate* upon your Church, the Dregs of the human Race. A Law, which though first designed only the more effectually to prevent all Danger to the Constitution from *Papists*, hath by an unnatural Perversion of it, actually broken down *all Distinction* established by divine Authority, betwixt *Sacred* and *Profane*: Has thrust Infidels and Profligates into the *most holy Places* of your Temple, and brings Deists and Debauchees to eat at the Lord's Table amongst the Children of his House.---- Let me ask you, Sir, in the *Name of Christ*, our common Master and Judge, doth not *this Law*, as now enforced, occasion the most notorious *Prostitution* of the holy Sacrament of his Religion? Is not its avowed and open Tendency and Use, to *pervert* an Institution of our SAVIOUR to *Ends*, not only quite different, but even opposite to *those* for which HE appointed it? Is it not making THAT a *political Instrument* to *divide* Christians, which CHRIST instituted as a *religious Instrument* to *coalesce* and *unite* them: Must it not be highly odious and offensive to *Almighty God*, to see an *holy Sacrament*, which his Wisdom hath ordained for spiritual only and religious Purposes, thus prostituted, perverted, made an Engine and Tool of State, employed to strengthen and perpetuate *Differences* amongst good Christians; and thereby debased, not to *worldly* only and *secular*, but to much *worse* than *worldly* Ends?

As to myself, Sir, I assure you, tho' I think *this Law* to be a most unrighteous Restraint upon us, and an undoubted Violation of our natural Rights; yet I am far from being perswaded that its *Repeal* would be of the least Service to our Interest as *Dissenters*. I doubt, and have often thought, that there is too much Truth in what you say---- " *That high Trusts, public Offices, and*
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“ *Court Employments, would be extremely apt to corrupt us, and to make practical Religion more visibly decay ;*” and that it would really rather injure than strengthen our Interest. I have never therefore, as a *Dissenter*, been at all solicitous for the Repeal. No, Sir, so far from this, that could I allow myself to *hate* and *wish* ill to the Church, I would most heartily wish it pertinaciously to hold fast this shameful Corruption. I would wish it, by no Means, to give up this open Profanation of the Authority and Name of *Christ* ; this Prostitution and Perversion of an holy Sacrament of his Religion ; this Destruction of all *Discipline* ; this open Door for the Reception of the most Abominable and Profane to its most *holy Mysteries and Rites* : This, If I wish’d it ill, I would earnestly wish your Church *inflexibly* to continue ; not doubting but, if long continued, it will surely at length bring down upon it the heavy *Anger* of *Almighty* God ; the just Resentment and Jealousy of a despised and insulted SAVIOUR ; and the deep Scorn and Contempt of all wise and thinking Men.

Whilst *this Law* continues, Sir, in its present Application, yourself cannot but see, that your *Discipline* must necessarily lie scandalously *prostrate, ruin’d, relax’d*. ’Tis impossible you can maintain, hardly the *Shadow* and *Form*, much less the *Spirit* of primitive ecclesiastic Government. Your *holy Things* must lie *common*, vilely trodden under Foot. Of all Persons in the Land therefore, *the Clergy*, should be the *first*, to labour with all their Might the Repeal of this *unhappy Law*. A Law, which cannot but be supposed terribly to bear hard upon, and wound the Consciences of many of them : And which subjects them to so servile a Prostitution of their Character, as cannot but load it with great Infamy and Reproach.

You tell me *, “ That you will engage, *simple as you*

* *Lett. I. p. II.*

“ *fit here*, that this Law shall be repeal’d ; and our Incapacities remov’d, when we will lay down our Enmity to the Church, that is in short to one half Part of the Constitution.----For *Church and State* here in *England* are so incorporated and united, that they have, like the married Pair, the same Friends and Enemies ; and stand or fall together.” I cannot pretend to say, Sir, how *simple you sat there*, when you gave us this Assurance, but I would to God you were able to *stand up*, and make it good. For,

I. Are you sure that *the Church* is really any essential Part at all, much less the *Half Part* of the *British Constitution* : Or, that *Church and State* are so married and interwoven, that they must stand or fall together ? Many, Sir, besides Dissenters will think, that this is a very partial and wrong Representation of our most excellent Frame of Government. Let any one in his Imagination annihilate the Form of our *present Church*. Let him suppose its Liturgy, Clergy, Articles, Canons, with all its Ceremonies and Rites, entirely *vanish’d* from the Land ; its *immense Revenues* applied in Ease of our heavy Taxes, and for the Payment of the public Debts ; and Preachers paid only by voluntary Contributions, as they are amongst us. Would the STATE hereby sustain so essential a Loss, that it could not thence-forward possibly subsist ? What ! would the *British Monarchy* be overthrown---Our Courts of Judicature be shut up---the Course of Law be stopp’d---Parliaments no more meet---Commerce and Trade stagnate---because what you call *the Church* is no more ? Romantick and absurd ! No : The Frame of our happy Government, both *civil* and *military*, might remain the *very same* : And you will give me leave to observe on the present Occasion, that in one Part of this Kingdom, those who profess themselves to be of your Church, as to its external Polity and Ceremonies, are almost to a Man inveterate avowed Enemies of our happy civil Constitution, and have

have risen in an impious Rebellion against his present Majesty, and joined with *Spaniards, French, Italians*, and home-bred Papists, in their wicked Attempts to subvert the Protestant Religion and Liberties.

2. This *Destruction* of the Church of *England*, is what we by no Means wish. May God in Mercy prevent it, by causing her to see, in this her Day, the Things belonging to her Peace.---We bear it not Enmity; GOD is our Witness. We wish it from our Souls Glory, Prosperity, Purity, Peace: The Glory of being form'd according to the perfect Plan of the primitive apostolick Church; purg'd of those Things, which yourselves know to be no Parts of the Religion of CHRIST! We wish to see it establish'd upon the catholic and broad Bottom, upon which alone it can stand firm; even the scriptural Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being its only Lawgiver and King: And not upon the narrow Basis on which it now rests, the Articles and Canons, the Institutions and Inventions of fallible and weak Men; on which it can never be strongly and firmly fixt; which are all, in the Apostle's Language, *Wood, Hay, Stubble*; whose End is to be burnt! We wish, Sir, that as it opens its Bosom, and admits the vilest Debauchees without demurring at their open Violation of God's Commands; so it would charitably extend its Arms to take us into its Communion, without insisting upon our Obedience to the Injunctions and Commands of MEN! Finally: we wish, that what God, in his Wisdom, hath been pleased to leave indifferent; your Church also, in her Wisdom, would be pleased to leave the same: That you would not attempt to mend the Institutions of JESUS CHRIST: But would receive us into your Church upon the same Terms and Qualifications as CHRIST and his Apostles would have received us into theirs; and as God will receive us into Heaven at last! This, Sir, I assure you, is all the Harm we wish the Church: Judge then yourself, whether we bear it any Enmity; and whether

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whether you are not now bound to take from us the *Incapacities*, which you engaged, *simple as you sat there*, should on this Condition be removed.

And you will give me Leave, Sir, to think, and to hope, that there are Numbers of your worthy *Clergy* of the same Mind ; that it would not at all lessen either the Glory, Stability, or Prosperity of your Church, if its Bounds were *thus enlarg'd*, to admit the *moderate Dissenters*, who sincerely desire so happy a *Coalition*. Its Enemies seem to multiply, and dark Clouds to rise around it. *Popery* is making dangerous and mighty Inroads on the one Hand ; and *Deism* on the other. There may come a Time, as there formerly has been, when the Fame of your Church being terribly threatened, we may again be consider'd as no despicable *Auxiliaries*. But ---- If we cannot be so happy, as not to be *cast out* and *rejected* by our Brethren ; our Consolation is this, that *God judgeth on the Earth* ; and that he will surely, at the *proper Season*, vindicate and plead the Cause of the Injured and Oppress'd.

But to return to the Point of *Discipline*. To the acknowledged Irregularity of the Lay-Chancellors in your Church, you would fain “ put in Balance the Lay-Preaching, Lay-Praying, and Lay-Ordination allow'd in our “ Churches*.” To which I reply, that in the Generality of our Churches there is no such Thing either allow'd, or ever done. Besides, if there were: Did not your *own Church* set us the Pattern? In the *Rubrick* before the general Confession at the Communion, did it not direct? ---- *Then shall this general Confession be made, in the Name of all those that are to receive, either by ONE OF THEM, or else by ONE OF THE MINISTERS*. How it came to be *omitted* in the late Editions of the *Common Prayer* ; whether it is done according to Law, and by Authority of Parliament ; you, Sir, perhaps can say.

* Lett. III. p. 38.

As to "Laymen being an essential Part of all our
 " Consistories and Synods; sitting in them, and having
 " an equal Vote with Pastors in all Business ---- jointly
 with them *suspending* from the Lord's Table, &c. †"
 This, Sir, is no other than the *scriptural* apostolic Plan.
 The aggrieved Person is by our Lord, you know, *Mat.*
xviii. 17. directed to *lay his Complaint before THE CHURCH,*
i. e. the Congregation of the Faithful: and if the Of-
 fender *neglected to hear THE CHURCH* (the Congregation)
 admonishing and reproofing him, he was then to be con-
 sider'd as an *heathen Man and a Publican*. So the cor-
 rupt Member, at *Corinth*, was to be solemnly excom-
 municated. How? Not by any particular Person,
Chancellor or Bishop; but it was to be the Act of the
whole Church. To the whole *Body or Congregation* of
 Believers in that City, *St. Paul* gives Directions, That
 when they were come together, they should deliver such an
 one to Satan. ---- And, that they should put away from
 amongst themselves that wicked Person, *1 Cor. v. 4, 5, 13.*
 which *Excommunication* he afterwards calls a *Punishment*
inflicted by the MANY, 2 Cor. ii. 6. So in that weighty
 and momentous *Question* ---- How far the *Gentiles* were
 to submit to the *Law of Moses*? The *Elders and Bre-*
thren are join'd with the *Apostles* in the Decision and
 Decree, *Acts xv. 23.* The *Laity* therefore have a *Right*
 to be consulted, and to judge, in these important *Church*
Matters, together with the Clergy; as they do, by their
 Representatives, in what you call our *Consistories*. But
 with you, Sir, a *single Layman* (this is the Absurdity
 which you seem willing to lose sight of) I repeat it,
 a *single Layman*, not only in Distinction from, but in
 actual Opposition to, *the Bishop*, and all the Church, both
Clergy and Laity, has Authority to judge and determine
 these important Matters; and excommunicates, or ab-
 solves; shuts out, or lets in, according to his *sole*
Pleasure.

And here, Sir, let me stop a Moment, and review the Point in Debate betwixt our good Dr. *Watts* and yourself. As for *the Lives* of the Dissenters, tho' God knows we have nothing whereof to *boast*, but a great Deal that calls for *Shame* and *Humiliation* on this Head; yet whether we are quite *so deep* immers'd in the Deluge of *Profaneness*, *Immorality*, and *Vice*, which spreads over the Land.---- Whether the *Blasphemies* and *Oaths*, the *Debauchery*, *Riot*, and guilty *Excesses*, which too generally prevail, be in Proportion to our Number, found as *rife* amongst us, as amongst the Members of the *establish'd Church*---- must be left, and we freely leave it, to the *impartial World* to judge betwixt us.

And as to *special Obligations and Advantages for holy Living*, which you contest strenuously with the *Doctor* to lie on your Side; what hath been above observed on your several Offices for *Confirmation*, *Absolution* of the Sick, and *Burial* of the Dead, shews them, I humbly think, to have really an ill Aspect upon the Morals of your People; a dangerous and apparent Tendency to cherish in them *false Hopes*, and to give them *wrong Notions* of the Terms of Acceptance, and of Entrance into Heaven. And of the deplorable State in which your *Discipline* lies (which you acknowledge to be of great Moment to the Edification of the Church) no Enemy need to wish a *sadder* Account than *yourself* have given of it. Upon the whole therefore, Sir, I cannot think, the worthy *Doctor* to deserve *Censure*, for attempting to rouse *Dissenters* from the languishing State of Religion amongst them, by putting them in mind of the *superior Advantages* they enjoy'd, and of the *peculiar Obligations* under which they manifestly lay to greater *Holiness of Life*.

You seem not a little displeased * at its having been urged as a Reason for *our Dissent*, "That your Church has shewn a persecuting Spirit," and with some Emotion

* Lett. III. p. 60, 61.

ask ---- “ Did the Church persecute at any Time its
 “ own Members? Were you or your Fathers ever per-
 “ secuted while they continued in the Church? And
 “ were they driven out of it by those Persecutions? ”
 I confess, Sir, you quite surprize me by such Questions
 as these. What! are you only a Stranger in *Britain*;
 and have never heard of the bitter Sufferings of our
 worthy Fathers *the PURITANS*? With what Silencings,
 Deprivations, Fines, Imprisonments, and lingering and
 cruel Deaths, for more than an *Hundred Years*, they were
 terribly harraß’d and oppress’d by *your Church*? Have
 you never read, with a *bleeding Heart*, the unrelenting
 Rigors of your Archbishops *Parker, Bancroft, Whitegift,*
Laud, --- under the *first* of whom above *an hundred*;
 under the *second*, above *three hundred* pious and learned
 Men, not only *Members* but *Ministers* of your Church,
 were silenc’d, suspended, admonish’d, deprived, many
 of them loaded with grievous and heavy Fines, and
 shut up in filthy Jails, where they expired slowly thro’
 Penury and Want? And what were *the Crimes* which
 drew this dreadful Storm of *episcopal* Vengeance on
 them? Nothing but their Scruples about the *Surplice*
 and the *Cap*, about Bowing at the *Name of Jesus*, about
Christ’s Descent into Hell, and such like momentous
 Points.

Have you never read, Sir, what Desolations *Laud*
 brought upon *our Fathers*, whilst yet in your Church?
 How *many Hundreds* of them were sequestred, driven
 from their Livings, excommunicated, persecuted in the
 High-Commission Court, and forced to leave the King-
 dom for not *punctually conforming* to all the Ceremo-
 nies and Rites; and not daring to tell their People, that
 they might *lawfully* profane *the Sabbath* by Gambols and
 Sports; and to publish from their Pulpits the *Permission*
 of the *King* to *break the Command of GOD* ---- And yet
 you ask ---- “ *Were your Fathers ever persecuted while they*
continued in the Church? ”

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Pray! what was it peopled the savage Desarts of North America? Was it not the *Thousands* of persecuted and oppress'd Families, who fled from *tyrannising* BISHOPS? Who not being suffer'd to worship quietly in their *native* Country, as their Consciences directed, sought a peaceful Retreat from the Rage of their *Fellow-Christians* amongst more *hospitable* Indians. ---- To omit a thousand Acts of Cruelty, which thro' several successive Reigns *our Fathers* suffer'd not only *from*, but when actually *in*, the Church. ---- Did she not at last, in a most arbitrary and unrighteous Manner *cast out* at once above *two Thousand* of them, excellent and pious Ministers, and abandon them and their starving Families, to great Poverty and Distress? To *heighten* that Distress, did not your Church, by *another* Act, banish them *five Miles* from any *City, Burrough, or Church* in which they had before served: and thereby put them at a *proper Distance* from their Acquaintance and Friends, who might minister to their Relief? Did she not by *another* Act forbid their meeting to *worship God*, any where but in your *own Churches*, under the Penalties of heavy Fines, Imprisonments, and Banishment to foreign Lands?

In Consequence of these *cruel* Acts, were not vast Numbers of *pious Clergymen*, our Forefathers (once the *Glory* of your Church) with Multitudes of their People, laid in Prisons amongst Thieves and common Malefactors, where they suffered the greatest Hardships, Indignities, Oppressions; their Houses were rudely rifled, their Goods made a Prey to hungry Informers, and their Families given up to Beggary and Want. “ An
 “ Estimate was published of near *eight Thousand* Pro-
 “ testant *Dissenters*, who had perished in Prison in the
 “ Reign only of *Charles II.* By severe Penalties in-
 “ flicted on them, for assembling to worship God, they
 “ suffered in their Trade and Estates in the Compass
 “ of a few Years, at least two Millions; and a List of
 “ *sixty Thousand* Persons was taken, who had suffered
 “ on

“ on a religious Account, betwixt the *Restoration* and
 “ the *Revolution* *.”---Behold, the Groans and the Blood
 of Miriads of oppressed *Puritans*, which cry beneath
 the Altar, *How long, O LORD!* But you are *deaf* to all
 their Groans ---- And with Insensibility enough ask ----
Were your Fathers ever persecuted?

“ But the Presbyterian and Independent Churches,
 “ have each in their Day of Power, discovered as much,
 “ and indeed *more* of that Spirit †.” Too much of that
bad Spirit 'tis acknowledged, they have *each* shewn. But
 surely there is *no Comparison* betwixt the Cruelties and
 Oppressions of your Church, and of their's. Your *little*
Finger, has been thicker than their Loins.

“ But whatever the Church may have been hereto-
 “ fore, you affirm, it is not *now* of a persecuting Spirit:
 And that there is not the least Appearance of its having
 “ disquieted and oppressed any on Account of Religion,
 “ for more now than half a Century ‡.” You had
 forgot, Sir, the famous *Schism* and *occasional Conformity*
Acts, which long since that Date *much disquieted* and
oppressed us. The *Test* and the *Corporation Acts* had also
 slipped your Memory, which at *this Time* deprive us
 of valuable and important Privileges, to which as faithful
 Subjects, and Members of the *Common-wealth*, we think
 we have a natural undoubted Right.

The present Governors of your Church indeed,
 (Thanks be to Heaven for it) are too wise and too
 righteous, to permit *Persecution* to rage against us. But
 to *their* Clemency and Justice, Sir, not to the kind and
 benevolent *Spirit* and *Constitution* of your Church, I
 humbly apprehend we owe it, that we are not *at this*
Time severely persecuted and oppressed. If the Act of
Uniformity, which to be sure you will call a *grand Pillar*
 of your Church, is not a very unrighteous and perfe-

* Vid. *Neal's Hist. Purit.* Vol. IV. p. 554. † Lett. III. p. 61.

‡ Lett. III. p. 61.

cutting *Act*, yet several of your *Canons* breathe, you know, Sir, a very cursing and persecuting *Spirit*. By the former, "Whoever shall declare or speak any Thing in the Denunciation or Depraving of the Book of *Common-Prayer*, or any Thing therein contained, or any Part thereof, he shall for the *first* Offence, suffer *Imprisonment* for one whole Year, without Bail or Mainprize; and for the second Offence, be *imprisoned DURING LIFE*." Here I affirm nothing, but appeal to the whole World; I appeal, Sir, to your own Conscience, whether this be or be not an *unjust and a persecuting Act*? By the latter, the *Canons*, "If any Man shall affirm any of the Things contained in the Book of *Articles*, *Common Prayer*, or of *Ordination*;" (in which yet there are many Things acknowledged by your own most learned Divines, and I doubt not, by yourself, to need Alteration;) your IV, V. VI. VII. and VIIIth *Canons*, thunder out upon him a terrible *Excommunication, ipso facto* *, by which he is to be cut off as a cankered and rotten Member, and not to be restored, till he hath repented and publickly revoked his *wicked Errors*. Doth not this favour, Sir, of an anti-christian and persecuting Spirit?

* Concerning an *Excommunication ipso facto*, our late learned *Primate*, Dr. *Wake*, has observed. "First, That there is no Need in this Case, of any *Admonition*, as where the Judge is to give Sentence; but every one is to take Notice of the Law at his Peril, and to see that he be not overtaken by it. And Secondly, That there is no Need of any Sentence to be pronounced, which the Canon itself has passed; and which is by that Means already promulged upon every one, as soon as he comes within the Obligation of it. In other Cases, a Man may do Things worthy of Censure, and yet behave himself so warily in them as to escape the Punishment of the Church, for want of legal Evidence to convict him. But *Excommunicatio Canonis ligat etiam occulta Delicta*. Where the Canon gives Sentence, there is no escaping; but the Conscience of every Man becomes obliged by it, as soon as ever he is sensible, that he has done that which was forbidden, under the Pain of such an *Excommunication*." Appeal in *Behalf of the King's Supremacy*, p. 22.

But

But you seem not, with Submission, to have *yourself* a just Horror of the dreadful Sin of *Persecution*, and to be a little too deeply tinged with this *fanatical* Spirit: For you call aloud for “ the *Church’s Sword* to fall upon “ *Hereticks*, as well as upon *immoral Persons*: And put “ me in Mind, that by that ancient Discipline” (which you *wish* to see restored) “ *open Schismatics* were treated almost as roughly as any Sort of Offenders whatsoever †.” By *Hereticks*, no doubt you mean, those whom you take to be such: And by *open Schismatics*, those who are withdrawn from *your Church*: *These* you wish to see *roughly handled*, and to have the *Church’s Sword* drawn upon them. But, God Almighty be praised! We live under so just a Government, as is not, we hope, like to gratify this *cruel Wish*.

Do you not remember, Sir, that the *first Reformers* were counted *Hereticks* and *open Schismatics*, by the Top Churchmen amongst whom they lived? That JESUS CHRIST and his *Apostles* were counted the very same? That our *dear Brethren* in *France*, who are now *bleeding* under the *Church’s Sword*, are most confidently reckoned *such*, by all the *Rulers* and *Priests* there? But is it fit that these *Hereticks* should be thus *roughly handled*? Or, is it *those only* whom you are pleased to call by *that Name*, who merit these *rough Measures*? Whenever, Sir, you shall produce your Patent from Heaven, constituting you JUDGE of HERESY, and shall be able *authoritatively* and *infallibly* to pronounce *what is*, and *what is not*, to be punished as such, *then* the *Church’s Sword*, will, I hope, be put into your Hands: But till *then*, Sir, ’tis much *safer* to let it remain *sheathed*; lest under the Notion of *Hereticks*, you fall upon and roughly handle, Men better than yourself. This has ever been the Case, since the Days of the Apostles, when *Ecclesiasticks* have presumed *authoritatively* to draw and use the *Church’s Sword*.

But you add, “ ’Tis well we can’t say your Church
 “ has shewn a *dividing* Spirit, and *actually divided itself*
 “ by an open Schism, from a sound Part of the Catho-
 “ lic Church ; *that*, indeed, would have been an *un-*
 “ *answerable Reason* for your dissent *.” Yes, this also,
 Sir, we can say, and therefore stand *justified* by your
 own Concession. That misguided unhappy Prince
Charles I. and his furious Primate *Laud*, began this *fatal*
Schism, in Complaisance to the Church of *Rome*, and
 actually divided the *Church of England*, from a sound
 Part of the Catholic Church ; and the same *schismatical*
Spirit has ever since too generally prevailed in it.

The *Dutch*, *Walloon*, and *French* Churches here in
England, were established by Charters from several of
 our Princes ; but Lord *Clarendon* informs us, “ The Bi-
 “ *shops* growing jealous that the countenancing *another*
 “ Discipline of the Church here by Order of State,
 “ would at least *diminish* the Reputation and Dignity of
 “ *episcopal* Government,” got them suppressed. “ And
 “ that this might be sure to look like *more* than was *ne-*
 “ *cessary* to the civil *Policy* of the Kingdom, whereas
 “ in all former Times, the Ambassadors and all foreign
 “ Ministers of State employ’d from *England*, into any
 “ Parts where the *reformed Religion* was exercised, fre-
 “ quented their Churches, and gave *all possible Counte-*
 “ *nance* to their Profession ; the *contrary* to this was now
 “ with great Industry practised, and some Advertise-
 “ ments, if not Instructions, given to the Ambassadors
 “ there (*Le Clerc* says they were *ordered*) to *forbear* any
 “ extraordinary Commerce with Men of that Profession.
 “ And Lord *Scudamore*, the last ordinary *Ambassador*
 “ there, not only declined going to *Charenton* (the Pro-
 “ testant Church) but furnished his own Chappel with
 “ Wax-Candles on the Communion-Table, &c. And
 “ besides, was careful to publish upon all Occasions by

* Lett. III. p. 60.

“ himself, and those who had the nearest Relation to
 “ to him, that the Church of ENGLAND looked not upon the
 “ Hugonots of FRANCE, as a Part of THEIR COMMUNION :
 “ which was likewise too much, and too industriously
 “ discoursed at Home.†” Behold here, Sir, the Church
 of England, actually dividing itself from a sound Part of
 the Catholic Church ! For such surely you will own the
 brave Protestants in France, who have born Testimony to
 the Faith by so great and so glorious a Fight of Afflictions,
 and sealed it with Seas of Blood.

I would also put you in Mind of another Fact, that
 seems to have escaped your Reading, or Memory. Upon
 the Queen of Bohemia's earnest Solicitation with the
 King her Brother (Charles I. Anno 1634) a Collection
 was ordered throughout England, for the poor persecuted
 Ministers of the Palatinate, who were banished their
 Country for their Religion. In the Brief which was
 granted for this Purpose, was this Clause : *Whose Cases*
are the more to be deplored, because this Extremity is fallen
upon them, for their Sincerity and Constancy in the true Re-
ligion, which we together with them profess. Archbishop
 Laud excepted against this Clause, and denied that the
 Religion of the Palatine Churches was the same with
 ours, because they were Calvinists, and their Ministers
 had not Episcopal Ordination. Laud acquainted the
 King with his Objections. The Clause was ordered to
 be expunged, and the brave unhappy Palatines were
 thus publickly disowned by the Governors of the Church,
 who in all reasonable Construction, must be supposed
 to know and speak its Sense, and not allowed to be Pro-
 fessors of the same true Religion.* How unchristian
 and schismatical this !

Of the like Schism was it also guilty, in the Occasion-
 al Conformity Act, which took Place in a late Reign.
 For it thereby FORBID under severe Penalties, all its Mem-

† Clarend. Hist. Rebell. Vol. III. p. 96, 97.

* Neal's Hist. Purit. Vol. II. p. 271.

bers who had any Places of Profit or Trust, to worship or hold Communion with any of the foreign Churches, *Dutch, French, &c.* in those Kingdoms, in which its *Liturgy* was not used. And should any Minister of any of the *reformed Churches of Scotland, France, Germany, Holland*, now come into *England*, would your Church receive them *as Ministers*, or admit them *as such* to officiate in its public Worship? I presume you know, Sir, she would not. But is not this *virtually* renouncing their Communion? Nor will you admit even the *Lay-Members* of any of these *foreign Churches* to your Communion at the *Lord's Supper*, except besides what *CHRIST* has ordered, they will submit also to some *Order and Institution* of YOUR OWN.

Now your great *Stillingfleet* † hath thus determined---
 “ That which *confines*, must also *divide* the Church ; for
 “ by that *Confinement*, a *Separation* is made betwixt the
 “ Parties confined, and the other ; which Separation
 “ must be made, by the Party *so limiting* Christian Com-
 “ munion.” Upon the whole then, 'tis most evident, that *your Church* has shewn, and does shew, a *schismatical* and *dividing* Spirit, has actually *divided itself* from sound Parts of the universal Church. *This* therefore you will please to take, as an *unanswerable Reason* for our dissent.

You must excuse me, Sir, if I think you treat a great deal *too severely* a worthy Body of Men, *our MINISTERS* ; when you represent them as “ Persons whom the Faith-
 “ ful, far from being permitted to enter into any *Pas-*
 “ *toral Relation* to them, are not permitted to have any
 “ *Christian Communion* with them ; no, not so much as
 “ any *intimate unnecessary* Acquaintance and Familiarity
 “ with them in *common Life* *.” And tell me---“ They
 “ are not duly ordained to their Office ; that their Ad-
 “ ministrations are most certainly irregular, and unne-
 “ cessary and wanton, if not a factious Departure from

† Ration. Account, p 359. * Lett. II. p. 8. “the

“ the primitive Order. And that therefore I cannot depend, at least with so much Assurance as is requisite to the Peace and Acquiescence of my Mind, that such Ordinances will be blessed to me.†”—I have weighed this Matter with a good deal of Attention, and upon the Whole am fully satisfied, both from *Scripture* and *Antiquity*, that *Presbyters* have a Right to, and did from the Apostles Times actually ordain. There are *two* Things, amongst many others, which I beg Leave to offer to your Consideration upon this Point.—

1. That the Ministers of the *Reformed Churches* in all foreign Parts, have almost all of them, I apprehend, no other than *Presbyterian Ordination*.

The whole Company of illustrious Protestant Churches of *Scotland, France, Holland, Switzerland, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Denmark*, except perhaps *Sweden, &c.* have none but *Presbyterian Ordination* amongst them. For *Luther, Calvin, Bercer, Melancton, Bugenbagius, &c.* and all the first *Reformers* and *Founders* of these Churches, who *ordained* Ministers amongst them, were themselves *Presbyters* and *no other*. And though in some of these Churches, there are *Ministers* which are called *Superintendents*, or *Bishops*, yet these are only *prima inter Pares* *, *the first among Equals* ; not pretending to any *Superiority* of ORDER. Having *themselves* no other Orders than what either *Presbyters* gave them, or was given them as *Presbyters*, they can convey *no other* to those they ordain. || You are a Gentleman of two great Discernment to urge the stale Pretence, that this is to these Churches

† Lett. I. p. 73. * Account of *Denmark*, p. 253.

|| The *Danish Church* is indeed at this Time governed by *Bishops*. But they look upon *Episcopacy* as only an human Institution ; and the first Protestant Prelates in that Kingdom, were ordained by *Bugenbagius*, a meer *Presbyter* ; who by Consequence, could convey no other than a *Presbyterian Ordination* to their Successors ever since. *Seckendorf, Hist. Lutheran. Lib. 20. Sect. 1. With Caveat*, p. 15.

a Matter not of *Choice*, but of *Necessity* and *Force*. For if they thought *episcopal Ordination*, I do not say *necessary*, but even more *regular* or *expedient*, could they not with the *greatest Ease* immediately obtain it? Would not the Church of *England*, upon *the least* Intimation of their Willingness to receive it, most readily send them *Bishops* to supply this Defect? You know, Sir, too well its charitable Disposition, and even *Offers* of this Kind, in the least to suspect it. Whatever *Censures* you pass then upon the *Orders* and *Administrations* of the Ministers amongst us, they equally fall upon all the *reformed Churches* throughout the whole *Protestant World*. If *ours* are an unnecessary and wanton Departure from the primitive Order, *theirs* are the same. Now it gives me great Pleasure to see myself in such a Crowd of excellent and good Company. And unless you can offer something more *demonstrative* on this Head, than I have ever yet seen, my Mind will enjoy *full Peace* as to the Regularity of the Ministration on which I attend. But,

2. It seems a little strange to hear you glorying over *us*, and consequently over all the *foreign Churches*, as to the Matter of *Orders*, when these *very ORDERS* in which you glory, you acknowledge to have derived ONLY from the Church of *ROME*. A Church which yourselves, in your Homilies, confess to be *idolatrous* and *antichristian*, “Not only an *Harlot*, as the Scripture calleth her, but also a foul, filthy, old, wither’d *Harlot*; “the *foulest* and *filthiest* that ever was seen.---And that “as it at present is, and hath been for 900 Years, it is “so far from the Nature of the *TRUE Church*, that no “thing can be more *.”---Note. These *Homilies* every Clergyman publicly declares, and subscribes with his Hand, that they contain a *godly and wholesome Doctrine*, fit to be read in Churches by Ministers.

Now it is ONLY, Sir, from this *filthy, wither’d, old*

* Vid. Homilies, pag. 162, 295.

HARLOT, that you derive, by Ordination, your *spiritual Descent*. You confess yourselves *born of her*, as to *ecclesiastical Pedigree*: And the *Sons* of this foulest and filthiest of Harlots, you acknowledge as *Brethren*, by admitting *their Orders* as regular and valid; whereas *those* of the *Protestant Churches* you reject. If a *Priest*, ordained with all the superstitious and idolatrous Rites of this *antichristian* and *false Church*, comes over to the Church of *England*; you admit him as a *BROTHER*, *duly ordained*; without obliging him to pass under *that Ceremony* again; But if a *Minister* of the *Reform'd Churches*, joins himself to you, you consider *him* as but a *Layman*, an *unordain'd Person*, and oblige him to receive *Orders* according to your *Form*. How, Sir, is it possible to account for this *Procedure*? Can *that Church*, which is *no true Church*, impart *valid and true Orders*? Can a *filthy old Harlot* produce any other than a *spurious and corrupt Breed*? Will you rest the *Validity and Regularity* of your Administrations on your receiving the *sacerdotal Character* from the *Bishops and Popes* of the *Romish Church*? Many, if not most, of whom, were *Men* of most corrupt and infamous *Lives*; *Men*, who were so far from being *regular and valid MINISTERS* in the Church of *JESUS CHRIST*, that they were not so much as *regular or real MEMBERS* of it at all; and therefore could not possibly, *duly*, or, *regularly* OFFICIATE therein; consequently, had *no Power* to communicate or convey *Orders or Offices* in the *CHRISTIAN Church*. Whatever *Offices* they convey'd therefore, are at best doubtful and suspicious; if not absolutely null, irregular, and void.---- So that really your own *Orders*, if strictly examin'd, may minister great Doubt and Disquietude of Mind.

If *Charity* then were silent; *Prudence*, methinks, should loudly dictate, that you *speak gently* as to the Authority and Orders of *our Ministers*, when you know it is in their Power so strongly to *retort*. It was therefore surely not *wise*, Sir, as well as extremely *unkind*,

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to set them up as Objects of public Odium and Avoidance; and to admonish “ every good Man not to have any intimate or unnecessary Acquaintance with them, or Familiarity in common Life.” But ---- BLESSED, our Lord hath said, are ye, when Men shall hate you, and SEPARATE YOU from their COMPANY, and CAST OUT your Names as EVIL, for the Son of Man’s sake: REJOICE ye in that Day, and leap for Joy; for behold, your Reward in Heaven is great * !

You very strenuously contest what you call “ one of the favourite and fundamental Principles of the Dissention, namely, That every Lay-Christian has a Right to chuse his own Pastor †.” A Right so evidently founded on Reason, Scripture, and the undoubted Practice of the primitive Church, and so generally acknowledged by all the learned of your own Communion, that I cannot but a little wonder at the Alertness with which you make your Attack upon it. The Charge given to the Christian People ---- To take heed what they hear ---- to beware of false Prophets ---- not to believe every Spirit, but to try the Spirits ---- incontestibly proves them to have a Right of Judgment and of Choice, relating to this Matter: And that this Right, which God has given them, it is their Duty to use.

When an Apostle was to be chosen in the Room of Judas the Traitor, the whole Body of the Disciples were applied to on that Occasion, Acts i. who APPOINTED by common Suffrage, two from their whole Number to be Candidates for that Office, v. 23. “ The Election, you say, was evidently made by God §.” But was it not as evidently made by the People also? If the Choice of one from the two be acknowledg’d to be the Act of God; was not the Choice of these two, from amongst the whole Number, as much the Act of the People? The People then were actually concern’d in that Choice.

* Luke vi. 22, 23. † Lett. II. p. 6. § Let. II. p. 8.

“ The

" The seven Deacons, Acts vi. you say, were but presented
 " or recommended by the Brethren †." But let the sacred
 Story judge ---- Wherefore, Brethren, LOOK YE OUT amongst
 you, seven Men of honest Report: And the Saying pleased
 the whole Multitude, and they CHOSE Stephen and Philip,
 &c. ---- Can Words be more exprefs?

That Bishops and Pastors were chosen in the ancient
 Church by the Suffrage of the People, the Evidence is
 so strong, as greatly to try the Countenance of the Person
 who disputes. Ignatius, if you will allow him genuine,
 says, * *It becomes you as the Church of GOD to CHUSE a*
Bishop. Alexander was made Bishop of Jerusalem, by the
 Compulsion or CHOICE of the Members of that Church.
 Upon the Death of Anterus, Bishop of Rome, All the
 People met together in the Church to chuse a Successor ----
 and they all took Fabianus and placed him in the episcopal
 Chair. So Cornelius, his Successor, was ELECTED by the
 Suffrage of the Clergy and Laity. Cyprian often ac-
 knowledges he was made Bishop of Carthage, *Favore*
Plebis ---- *Populi universi Suffragio*, &c. By the FAVOUR
 and VOTE of all the People ††. And expressly says, *Plebis*
maxime habet Protestatem, vel eligendi dignos Sacerdotes,
vel indignos recusandi. The chief Power of CHUSING worthy
 Ministers, and of REJECTING the unworthy, belongs to THE
 PEOPLE. I produce no further Evidence upon a Point
 so incontestible, but the Words of a learned Brother of
 your own, high enough for Church Power, " That
 " the People had Votes in the Choice of Bishops all must
 " grant; and it can be only Ignorance and FOLLY that
 " pleads the contrary ‡."

" You think a Man provides very well for his Soul,
 " who submits himself to the Instructions, and devoutly
 " attends all the Administrations of an able and ortho-

† Ibid. * Epist. ad Philad. †† Vid. Constitut. and
 Discipline of the Primitive Church, p. 46. ‡ Lowth of
 Church Power.

“dox Minister, by *whomsoever* provided. And it will
 “be confessed, you suppose, that the *King*, and *Bishops*,
 “*Lord Chancellor*, *Nobility*, and *Gentry*, who are our
 “greater Patrons, are *more competent Judges* of the
 “Abilities and Orthodoxy of Clergymen, and
 “of their Fitness for particular Stations, than the
 “*common Run of Men*, especially *the Vulgar* §.” But
 imagine yourself, Sir, for a Moment on the other Side
 the Water, preaching this wholesome Doctrine to the
 good *Protestants* in *France*. If *Kings*, *Bishops*, &c. have
 Authority and Right to *appoint Pastors* to the People,
 then the People *are bound* to receive and attend the
Pastors they send. But if this be *right* in one Country
 (I must again put you in Mind) ’tis *right* also in ano-
 ther; unless *one Kingdom* can produce a Warrant, or
 Charter from Heaven giving it *such Authority*, which
other Kingdoms have not. If this Doctrine be Truth in
England, ’tis Truth also in *France*. The brave *Pro-*
testants then have *rashly* and *unwarrantably* withdrawn
 themselves from the Pastors, whom the *King* and *Bishops*
 had set over them; they ought to return, and submit
 to their *established* Guides, and not *proudly* attempt to
 find Ministers more able and orthodox, than those *their*
Superiors have solemnly deputed to that Trust. Will
 you stand, Sir, to this Doctrine? If not, you must allow
 every Man a Right to judge for himself.

To the common and just Plea “That every Man
 “has as good a Right to chuse his own *Pastor*, to whom
 “to commit the Care of his Soul, as to chuse his *Lawyer*
 “or *Physician*, with whom he intrusts his Body or
 “Estate,” you reply: “Physicians in many Places are
 “provided by Governors for those who are sick, as
 “in *Chelsea*, and other Hospitals, whilst no Body dreams
 “of any Ineroachment upon their natural Rights †.”
 But tell me, Sir, would you not complain, if whenever

§ Ibid. p. 9. † Lowth on Church Power, p. 13.

you were sick, you were OBLIGED to accept of this public Provision; and MUST commit yourself to the Care of those Gentlemen of the Faculty who officiated in the Hospital, supposing you lived near it, whatever Notion you had of their Fidelity or Skill? Or should a *Physician* be provided, and established by Law in each Parish of this Kingdom, would you not call it an *Infringment* of your natural Right, to be obliged to call him in (however ignorant or incapable you took him to be) and to commit your Health to his Care; especially if there was at Hand another, licensed by Authority, whom you thought to have better Judgment, and from whose Prescripts you had received frequent and signal Relief? I am persuaded in this Case, you would strongly and very justly complain of the Restraint. But every Man surely, is as capable, and has as undoubted a Right to judge and to chuse what Minister to attend for the Edification of his Soul, as what Physician to use for the Recovery of his Health.

“ No, you reply, there is a Difference in the two Cases; your *Pastors* are your *Guides* and *Governors*, to whom you owe *Subjection* in spiritual Things: And it is not, I think, quite so reasonable to challenge to yourselves the chusing of these, as of the other who have no *Authority* over you *.” But I beseech you, good Sir, who MADE them my GOVERNORS? Who GAVE them this Rule and Authority over me? Does every gay STRIPLING, just emancipated from the College, that can get (and there are various Ways of getting, you know Sir, not fit to be here mention’d) to be inducted into a good Living, does he, I ask, thence forward become GOVERNOR of all the Souls dwelling in his Parish, to whom they owe Subjection in spiritual Things? What must all the learned, the wise, the grave and experienced Persons residing in that Parish, consider the enrobed YOUTH as their spiritual RULER, vested with AUTHORITY over them,

* Ibid p. 14.

in Things pertaining to GOD, to Conscience, and to Eternity ! Yes, *he has AUTHORITY*, you say, *over me*, I OWE him, *spiritual Subjection*. But how far, Sir, does the Authority of my young RULER extend ? Must I *believe* whatever he tells me, because *He* hath said it ; or, *do* whatever he commands me, because *He* hath enjoined it ; or, follow my *spiritual Guide* wherever *He* shall lead me, without considering, examining, and judging for myself, whither the Course tends ? And if I happen to think he is leading me *wrong*, must I still *obey* and *submit* to my *ghostly* DIRECTOR, and trust God with the Event ? Am I to deliver myself up *entirely*, or only *a little*, and *in Part*, to his sacerdotal *Authority* ? and must I see Things in Religion, *only* and *always* by the Eyes of my *Overseer*, or ought I not also *sometimes*, at least, to see with *my own* ? Will you please to inform me also, whether, as my young GOVERNOR undertakes to *judge for me* now, he will also undertake to be *judged for me* hereafter ; and *be damned for me* too, if I happen to go astray, by going as *he* directs ? ---- A certain *Nobleman*, not half a Century ago, got his *Huntsman* inducted into a good Living ; and from the *Care of his Hounds*,¹ advanced him to the Priesthood and to the *Cure of Souls*. Now from the Time of his Investiture with this new Character and Office, he became the GOVERNOR and GUIDE, *it seems*, of all the Souls in his Parish, and they OWE *him* *Subjection in spiritual Things*. If a *Locke* then, a *Newton*, or even his *Lordship* himself who gave him the Living, had dwelt within its Bounds, they *ought* reverently to regard HIM as their *spiritual GOVERNOR and DIRECTOR* ; and to *submit themselves to him*, as having the *RULE* over them, and *watching for their Souls*. ---- But are these *Claims* to be vouched, or is this *Doctrine* to be preached, in this Age of Liberty and Light ? Let them for the Honour of CHRISTIANITY, be eternally suppressed. ---- I am forced then to return, Sir, to the Point whence I
set

set out, and to acknowledge *the Right* which every Man has, in Things of Religion, to call *no Man upon Earth* MASTER, but to examine and judge, and chuse for himself.

As to the *Manner* in which the Choice of our Ministers is conducted, against which you except, I believe no Elections of any Kind, are transacted with greater *Fairness* and *Equity* than these. And the Nature of the Thing speaks, that thus it must be. For *ours* being Assemblies formed only by *Consent*, and supported only by *voluntary* Contributions of their Members, any oppressive or iniquitous Management would throw them presently into Confusion, disband and break them up. To your Question--- *Who are the Electors* ? And to all the Objections you raise on that Head---I reply, by praying you to turn your Eyes, Sir, to a *British Parliament*, or to an *English Convocation*, and tell me, *who are the Electors* ? And how is the Choice conducted ? But if both the *Parliament* and *Convocation*, notwithstanding the enormous Disproportion and Inequality of the *Electors*, be yet *accounted* and *gloried in* as the REPRESENTATIVE of the Nation ; and you compliment your *Fellow Britons* upon their *invaluable Privilege* in being ruled by Laws of *their own making*, and in paying no Taxes, but what *themselves* by their Representatives, have *consented to levy*. Your Exceptions to our Elections will be presently withdrawn, and you will still give us leave to *glory* as possessing this ancient undoubted Right of the Christian Church.

But 'tis Time, Sir, that I now release your Patience and Attention, having strained, I fear, both to their utmost Extent. There are many other Parts of your Letters as liable to remark, as those I have taken Notice of, but I would not be tedious.--I might have expostulated with you largely on your reading, as Parts of your publick Worship, the fabulous and gross *Legends of Bel and the Dragon*, of *Judith* and *Susannah* ; and above all, the

the *magical Romance* of receiving a fair Virgin from the Incantments of her *infernal Lover*, and conjuring away the *amorous Devil Asmodeus*, by the Fumes of a Fish's Liver ---- Is it for the Honour of the *Christian Name*, think you, Sir, to have such *spurious and idol Tales* read solemnly in our Churches (if *solemnly* they can be read) and made Parts of our *publick Worship*? What will an *Unbeliever* think, when present at such Worship? When he sees *such Things* not only bound up with the HOLY SCRIPTURES, but commanded to be read *as such* in the Order of the Common Prayer! Will it not heighten his Contempt of the *Credulity* of Believers, and establish his Prejudices against the History, the Miracles, and Doctrines of CHRIST?----

I might also have asked you, Sir, to what *Oriental DEITY* you pay your Devoirs, when from the *North*, the *South*, the *West*, the Worshippers in your Church on certain solemn Occasions, turn reverently towards the *EAST*, and make their *peculiar Honours*? To whom, Sir, I beseech you, are these *peculiar Honours* paid? Not surely to the *immense, omnipresent* JEHOVAH; he is an *INFINITE Spirit*, you know, alike present in all Places; not more confined to one Quarter of the Heavens, than to another: To represent him as *being so*, is to dishonour and offend him, to detract from the Glory of his *Immensity* or *Omnipresence*, and to give Men very false and unworthy Notions of God. This worshipping towards the *EAST*, is not, I think, *ordered* by any *Canon* of your Church, which is now generally received; but 'tis (if I mistake not) its *common* and *prevailing Practice*. I should be glad to be informed, for I assure you, Sir, I am quite ignorant, what *Shadow of Ground*, either from Reason or Scripture, you can possibly pretend, for this unaccountable *Superstition*, for such you must allow me at present to think it. If you say, The Worship is paid *toward the ALTAR*, this seems to make the Matter more inexplicable still. For *what* is there in the ALTAR,

to make it a proper Object of *religious* Veneration? Indeed, whilst the *Bread* GOD was upon it, the People who believed it to be the *very Body* of CHRIST, did well to pay their Homage to it: But now *that* IDOL is taken thence, I cannot for my Life perceive, what Shadow of Divinity Protestants see in the ALTAR, that they should give it *religious* Honours.

As much, Sir, am I at a Loss, when endeavouring to reconcile to Reason and good Sense, another of your *additional Beauties and Splendors* of public Worship, viz. *Bowing at the Name of JESUS*. As for that Passage of the Apostle, *Philip. ii. 10. That at the Name of JESUS every Knee shall bow* ---- the learned Men of your Church, I presume, *universally* disclaim it, as in the least *authorizing* or *injoining* this Practice. Your great Dr. Nichols * vindicates your Church from such an *uncouth and ridiculous Abuse* of this Text, and affirms, *that it is not once mentioned in any of your ecclesiastical Constitutions*, as to this Matter, and adds, *that you are not so DULL as to think, that those Words can be rigorously applied to this Purpose*. But if *this Text* be acknowledged not in the least to authorize or require this *Act of Worship*, what Shadow of Argument, Sir, can you possibly bring, either from *Reason* or *Scripture*, which shall so much as seem to support it? Why then does your Church command (Canon XVIII.) *that when in Time of divine Service the LORD JESUS shall be mentioned, duly and lowly Reverence shall be done by all Persons present?* Is not *this*, Sir, by your own Confession, an *Act of Will Worship*, a *Commandment*, an *Invention of Men*, not in the least founded upon the Authority and Will of God!

But why, Sir, must this *lowly Reverence* be made at the *Name of JESUS*, and not at the Name of CHRIST, at the Name IMMANUEL, JEHOVAH, or GOD? Is there not in *all these*, something at least as venerable

* Defence, &c. Part II. p. 319.

and worthy of *peculiar* Honours ; indeed something *much more* so, than there is in the *Name of JESUS* ; a *Name* not at all *peculiar* to our blessed Saviour, but which was *common* to him with a great many other Men ? ---- But if this *peculiar Reverence* must be made at the *Name of JESUS*, why not at *all Times* whenever 'tis mentioned, at least in public Worship ? Why in the *Creed* only, which is but a *human Composition*, and not every Time 'tis read from the *Gospels* and *Epistles*, which were indited by the HOLY-GHOST ? But I press no further a *Point*, which I believe few of your own Church think capable of a rational and solid Defence.----

I have now finished my Reply, Sir, to the *Letters* with which you have publicly honoured me, and have with Freedom set before you, the chief *Difficulties* and *Objections* which keep me in a State of Separation from your Church. If by calm and fair Argument, you can shew my *Objections* to be futile and weak, I shall with Pleasure become your *Convert*, and readily obey the Calls of worldly Interest and Honour.

But as you, Sir, have the *Dignities, Emoluments, and Powers* of this World on your Side, you must give us Leave to think, at least till we are better taught, that we have TRUTH on ours. TRUTH, which is GREAT, and *will finally prevail*. Nor am I, Sir, without Hope, that, upon an *impartial* Review of the Merits of the Cause betwixt us, *omnipotent* TRUTH may even bend your Mind towards us, and dispose you, like one who has since had the Honour of being called the *great Apostle*, to join yourself to *those* you once censured and despised.

What though you have not the *Honours* and *Profits* of this World to draw you to our Communion, are we ever the less like to be the genuine *Apostolick Church* of a crucified, despised, insulted JESUS for this ? Hath he not expressly told us, that *His Kingdom is not of this World* * - - That *whoever will come after him, must deny*

* Joh. xviii. 26.

himself,

himself, and take up his Cross † ---- That not many mighty and noble are called ‡ ? Are not the *Witnesses* to TRUTH, to prophecy, clothed in Sackcloth §, till the promised *Times of refreshing* come from the Appearance of CHRIST ? Is not the PURE Apostolic Church, the true Spouse of CHRIST, represented in the *Revelation* as a *Woman driven into the Wilderness* †, i. e. in an afflicted and forsaken State ; whilst the corrupt and antichristian Church (the apostate Church of Rome) is caressed and enriched by the *Kings of the Earth* **, glittering in all the Pomp and Splendor of this World, wantoning in Luxury, Power, and Wealth ? Does TRUTH need the Charms of *earthly Grandeur* to recommend it, or the Force of *civil Power* to spread or to establish it ? Was it *thus* the blessed GOSPEL was at first propagated, made its Way, and prevailed over all the Earth ? No, worldly Grandeur and Power have generally, you well know, Sir, if not evermore, been extremely *injurious* to it ; have enervated, obstructed, under Pretence of improving, have greatly corrupted and depraved it, and have robbed it of its *native Beauty*, and Glory, and Strength.

High Dignities and Preferments, Mitres and Thrones, Lordships and large Revenues, have a mighty Force, you will own, Sir, to *bias* and *pervert* the Mind, in its Searches after TRUTH. These are not *the Means* which the God of TRUTH uses, to *draw* the Mind to it ; but you know they are *the Means*, which the great ENEMY is wont to use, to *seduce* the Mind from it. 'Tis therefore, I apprehend, Sir, no Presumption at all in Favour of *any Church*, that it shines with all the Glory of worldly Honours and Wealth. This the *prophetic Scriptures* very clearly describe as the State of the *false Church*, whilst the *true Church* of JESUS CHRIST, his

† Mat. xvi. 24. ‡ 1 Cor. i. 26. § Rev. xi. 3. † Ib. xii. 14. ** Ibid. xvii. 4, 5---13---17.

genuine and faithful Followers, are to be a *little, despised Flock* : A *Sect every where spoken against* : In the World it is to have *Tribulation*, till the expected *happy Period*, when it shall be the FATHER's good Pleasure to give them THE KINGDOM.

Let not then the *low Estate* of our Interest, as to the present World, at all frighten or discourage you, Sir, from casting in your Lot amongst us. *The World passeth away*, and all its Glories and Pomp will soon vanish like a Dream before the descending *Son of God*, whom we stedfastly expect ---- And then to be *found faithful* ; and to have stuck with *unshaken LOYALTY* to the ONLY Lawgiver, Lord, and King of his Church.--- To have *denied ourselves* and worldly Honours, Preferments or Profits out of Conscience towards Him. --- To have been *separated from Men's Company*, cast out and reproach'd, because we would not make a Sacrifice of our Virtue and Integrity to the Applause of *the Many*, or the Favour of *the Great*.---- Will yield divine Comfort, and procure *immortal Honours* in the everlasting Kingdom of God. Pardon me, Sir, if I am here acting a little out of Character, and seem to invade your Office: For I am extremely ambitious of engaging so ingenious a Gentleman amongst us.

These, Sir, are the Prospects with which *Dissenters* support themselves under all their Disadvantages with regard to the present World. They remember whose *Disciples* and *Followers* they are--- who it is that hath said, *IN VAIN do they worship me, teaching for Doctrine the COMMANDMENTS OF MEN*.---- Who hath strictly charg'd them to call NO MAN upon Earth MASTER, because ONE only is their MASTER, even CHRIST. ---- And, finally, who it is that hath promised, that if any Man shall forsake *House, or Brethren, or Sisters, or Children, or Lands, for his Name's Sake* ; he shall receive an hundred fold ; and shall inherit EVERLASTING LIFE.

I now conclude, Sir, by beseeching you very carefully to remember, that the Controversy betwixt us depends *absolutely and entirely* upon the Decision of this *single Point*.----Is there any OTHER Lawgiver or King in the Church of GOD, to whose *Authority and Command*, as to Things of Religion, CHRISTIANS are bound to submit, BESIDES JESUS CHRIST ? Or is there not ? If there be *no other* Lawgiver, *besides* JESUS CHRIST, *no other* King, *no other* Authority to whose *Decrees* in Point of Doctrine, and to whose *Injunctions* in Point of Worship, CHRISTIANS are obliged, and ought to *submit* : Then *the Dissenters*, in every impartial Judgment, will be, must be, *justified* : Then they *act right* ; then they ought to be *commended*, and will surely be *rewarded* for adhering loyally and firmly to the ONE only KING and LORD of the Church : And for faithfully Opposing the Claims of *any other Power* ; and for Refusing Obedience to the Injunctions of *any other Lawgiver* ; and the Decisions of *any other Judge* ; who hath made *other* Articles of Faith, *other* Terms of Communion, *other* Rites of Worship, *besides* and *above* those which CHRIST himself has made.

For to illustrate the Case.----If any *foreign Prince* shall pretend to make Laws, and prescribe Rules of Action to the People of *these Realms*, and shall exact Obedience to his Injunctions from the Subjects of King George ; I ask, does not your *Allegiance* to HIM, your ONLY Sovereign, *require* and *oblige* you to make your Protest against any such Laws, and to *refuse* your Obedience to them ? But is not the Church a *Province* in which CHRIST *alone* is King, as much as these Realms are the Dominions *only* of King George ? If any *human Potentate* then shall rise up in *the Church*, and shall claim *Authority and Dominion* over the Consciences of CHRIST'S Subjects ; Authority as to *Things of Faith*, to decree what He hath not decreed ; and Dominion as to *Things of Worship*, to appoint Rites and Institutions which He hath

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hath not appointed; I ask you, Sir, does not your *Allegiance* to CHRIST, your *only* Sovereign, *require* and *oblige* you to enter your Protest against such *usurp'd Authority*, and to refuse your Obedience to it ?

This, Sir, I repeat it, because I earnestly intreat your peculiar Attention to it, is the *essential* and *important* Point upon which the Controversy betwixt us entirely turns. If you *can* prove, that there is *another* Lawgiver, *another* Judge, *another* King in the Church, *besides* JESUS CHRIST, to whose Authority we are to submit in Things of Religion ; and that the *King* and *Parliament* of these Realms are this *Lawgiver*, and this *Judge* ; you will then at once gain your Point ; and by that *single Blow* you will entirely overthrow the *dissenting* Interest and Churches. We will immediately become your Converts ; and flock into the *Establish'd* Church.

But if you *cannot* prove this Point ; you then *yield* the Cause to us ; you then, in effect, own us *justified* before the World ; and you leave us to indulge the rational and reviving Hope of being acknowledg'd by our *great Lawgiver*, at his Return into the World, as his *loyal* and *obedient* Subjects ; of being advanced to *peculiar* Honours and Dignities in his Kingdom, as we have here suffer'd on Account of our *Duty* and *Allegiance* to him ; and of receiving from our JUDGE, before Angels and Men, that Sentence of Applause---- *Well done, GOOD and FAITHFUL Servants, enter ye into the Joy of your LORD.*

I have only to add, Sir, that this *Principle*----- That CHRIST is the *only* Lawgiver and King in his Church ; and that no Man, no Body of Men upon Earth, have any Authority to make Laws, or to prescribe Things *in Religion*, which shall oblige the Consciences of his Subjects ; is *the grand, the only* Principle, upon which the *Unity*, the *Purity*, and the *Peace* of the *Christian Church* can possibly subsist. Take away *this*, and you
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let in endless Discords and Corruptions into it ; You split it into Parties : You make CHRISTIANITY one Thing, in one Country ; a quite different, in another. In *England* you make it wear an *Episcopal* Form : In *Scotland*, a *Presbyterian* : In *France*, a *Popish* : In *Denmark*, a *Lutheran* : In *Prussia*, a *Calvinist* : In *Russia*, a *Grecian*, &c.----But ought these Things to be so ? Is CHRIST *divided* ? Is this *the Unity* of his one beautiful, well-compacted *Body* ? Can these be *all* genuine apostolic *Christianity* ?----Rather, are either of them so ?----When the *Powers of this World* take upon them *authoritatively* to interpret and prescribe in Things of Religion, which are CHRIST's Kingdom and Province, they act beyond their Sphere : They invade the Throne of *another* Prince : The certain Consequence of which is Confusions, Separations ; the *Unity* of the Church is broken, the Rights of *Christians* violated, a Gate open'd for innumerable Superstitions and Inventions to enter, and mingle with the pure Doctrines of CHRIST ; and hence necessarily flow Schisms, Emulations, Contentions, and every evil Work.----

I beseech you, Sir, by the *Mercies of God* ; and for the *Honour of Christianity* ; and by the *Allegiance* you owe your *only Lawgiver* JESUS CHRIST, to weigh these Things in an impartial and unbiass'd Mind. May his *Spirit of Truth* judge betwixt us upon the Point, and teach his Will ! To his Influence I commend you, Sir, and am,

With great Sincerity,

Your very Humble Servant,

A DISSENTER.



P O S T S C R I P T,

Containing Remarks on the DEFENCE *of*
your Three LETTERS.

THE above Letter being sent to the Press before your *Defence*, &c. was advertised ; its Publication was staid, till I had seen what Occasion it might give, either to retract or support what was offer'd in my *first Letter*. You seem moved at its pretending to be an Answer to your *three Letters*, when so small a Part of them is consider'd therein : And with Airs quite sutable to the Cause you are pleading, *ecclesiastical Authority*, give me to understand, that your taking any Notice of this Performance is to be consider'd as a Condescension to which you were not obliged, and which I had no Right to expect from you. But, pray recollect : What was the avow'd Design and Purport of your Letters ? Was it not to *refute the great and popular Objections of the Dissenters*, and to *bring me over to your Church* ? But upon reading your Letters, I found you had scarce touch'd upon the *principal Objection* which kept me from your Church. Was it not then my Part to state the Objection to you, and set it in its full Light ? As *unask'd*, you had taken on you to be my Instructor in this Affair ; had I not a Right to lay my Difficulty before you, and to demand your Solution of it ? What, must I *confine* myself to the *Pleas* which you had seen fit to cook up for the Dissenters ; and if I presume to offer others, you will magisterially call

call them *Ramblings*, in which you are not obliged to follow ? Very pleasant indeed !

Here therefore I now put in my Claim, Sir, and give you to understand, that I expect your plain and full Answer to the *several Objections* against your *establish'd Forms* presented in the above Letter : Some of which, though you knew them to be of great Weight with Dissenters, you dextrously avoided bringing into the Debate. To this you are most clearly and indispensibly obliged by the *Province* you have taken on you. If there be any Parts of the *Liturgy* indefensible and absurd, this (1.) Condemns your own CONFORMITY, who not only declare, but solemnly subscribe your *unfeigned Assent and Consent* to ALL and EVERY THING contained in and prescribed by the *Book of Common Prayer*, &c. And, (2.) it justifies the *Separation*, by proving it a severe and cruel Thing to cast out above 2000 of our Ministers from the Church for not declaring and subscribing this *unfeigned Assent and Consent*, &c. which began the *Separation*.

This being premised, we come to the Point of *Church Authority*, upon which the Controversy turns. Here I observe, with pleasure, that you are for mutilating your XXth Article, ridding your Hands of one Part, and holding only to the other. " *The Church's Authority in Matters of Faith you have nothing*, you say, to *do with* *." But this, you know, your Church claims as much as a *Power to make Ceremonies* ; and against this Part of its Claim I as much excepted as against the other. When you declare therefore *you have nothing to do with it*, you mean, if I take you right, you will not pretend to undertake its Defence. This to be sure is wise : No Man upon Earth being able to defend it. But then, is it not extremely hard that your Church should still *inflexibly* maintain its Claim to *this Authority* : Should force its *Clergy* to subscribe and acknowledge

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this Claim ; and keep Dissenters from a Share in those Emoluments, "*after which, you say, they languish,*" partly for refusing their solemn Subscription to so *unreasonable* a Claim ?

" By the Church's Power to decree Rites and Ceremonies, is meant, a Right in the Pastors and Governors thereof, to ordain and appoint such Things, so as to make it, *ordinarily*, the Duty of the People to conform themselves to them †."--- You have artfully declined to say, *whom* you understand by its *Pastors and Governors* ; but from other Passages § it is evident you mean the *Bishops and Clergy* ; for the *Civil Magistrate*, you declare, *has no such Power at all* ‡. Now,

1. That the *Clergy* have no Power nor Authority at all of this kind over the *Laity*, I proved beyond all doubt from the express Command of our great Lawgiver. --- *Call no Man upon Earth MASTER ; ONE is YOUR MASTER, even CHRIST, and all ye are Brethren **. *The Princes of the Gentiles exercise Dominion and Authority over them, but it shall not be so amongst you* †. What have you said in Answer to these Texts ? Not a single Word. You leave them to stand in full Force against you : And without one Text of Scripture to support this Authority of the *Clergy* over the *Laity*, you go on to treat it as a Thing indisputable and allow'd : And labour hard in raising a pompous Structure upon the Sand. What you say as to the *Kiss of Charity*, has been consider'd above, p. 62. Should even *this* be allow'd to be a *merely ecclesiastical and prudential Institution*, it will by no Means establish the *Authority* you claim for your *Pastors and Governors* ; the Orders, Decrees and Appointments of those Times being by the *common Consent and Suffrage* of the whole Church ; in

† Defence p. 10. § Lett. II. p. 14. ‡ Def. p. 18.

* Mat. xxiii. 8, 9. † Mat. xx. 25.

which the *Laity* had an equal, if not a far greater, Share of Authority than the *Clergy* ††. But,

2. Your lodging this Power in the *Pastors and Governors* absolutely contradicts the *Articles* themselves. For as the XXth Art. claims it for the *Church* : So the immediately preceeding Art. (XIX) expressly defines what it means by THE CHURCH, viz. *A Congregation of faithful Men where the pure Word of God is preach'd.* ---- 'Tis to the *whole Body* of the Faithful then that this Power of decreeing Ceremonies, if any such there be, belongs : How then do you presume, Sir, to wrest it from them, and to vest it solely in the *Clergy* ? And,

3. When you add, *that to this Right of the Pastors to decree Ceremonies, it is the People's Duty, ORDINARILY, to conform themselves* : The Word, *ordinarily*, seems thrown in as a Mist to darken the Point ; a seasonable *Salvo* to which to retreat when you feel yourself push'd. What mean you, Sir, by *ordinarily* ? How shall the People know *when* it is, and *when* it is not, their Duty to submit to these Injunctions of their spiritual Governors ? Are the People themselves to judge, *always* to judge, of the Fitness and Expedience of the injoin'd Ceremonies ; or are they not ? If they are not, then they are absolutely to resign themselves to the Direction of their Governors ; which is palpable and gross *Popery*, and leads directly to *Rome*. But if they are, then the *Babel* of Church Authority is at once overthrown : For then the Authority resides no longer in the *Decrees* of the Governors, but in the *Judgment* of the People. 'Tis the Judgment *they* form of them, which *alone* makes them binding upon them or not. Of *their Number*, whether they are too many ; and of *their Nature*, whether they are superstitious, foppish, and vain, you seem sometimes to allow, *the People* are to judge : But if they have a Right to judge, they have Right also to act in

†† *Vid. Exam. of the Codex, pag. 120.*

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Consequence of that Judgment ; and to withdraw from those Churches where such Ceremonies are injoin'd, as *they think* foppish and vain ; and to join themselves to others, where *they think* the Worship of God perform'd in a more scriptural and proper Manner. So then, the solemn Parade of *Church Authority* turns out a meer Shadow. 'Tis an Authority to command, which no one is under Obligation to obey. This Power of *making Ceremonies* must be either limited or unlimited : If it be not *limitted* (which you seem to disavow) Pray ! *what* is it *limits* ? *What* prescribes its Bounds *beyond which it shall not pass* ? If the Church has Power to ordain *five* Ceremonies, why not *ten* ? And if *ten*, why not more ? Who shall pretend to say how far it may go ?

Your Illustration "*as to the King's Injunctions,*" &c.* will not reach the Case ; because the Constitution and Laws of *England* empowers the King to make such Injunctions : But you have not yet proved, and I presume never will prove, that the Constitution of the *Christian Church* empowers its Pastors to *decree* Ceremonies and Rites.

You ask † ---- " Where does the Church pretend to *be alone the proper Judge*, or where disallow private *Christians* to judge for themselves in these Matters ? " I will tell you, Sir, in its XXXIVth Article, which decrees, that *whosoever thro' his PRIVATE JUDGMENT, willingly and purposely doth openly break the Traditions and Ceremonies of the Church, which be not repugnant to the Word of GOD, and be ordain'd by common Authority, ought to be rebuked openly (that others may fear to do the like) as he that offendeth against the common Order of the Church, and hurteth the AUTHORITY of the MAGISTRATE. Private Judgment*, you see, is here *forbid* to oppose the *common Order* of the Church, and the *Authority of the Magistrate* ; and when it presumes so to do, is to be censured and punished for it.

“ The Church of *France*, and the Church of *Rome*,
 “ you acknowledge, to be as much possessed of this
 “ Power as the Church of *England*: But it does not
 “ follow that because they have a Power to decree
 “ Rites, that they may therefore decree *Fopperies* and
 “ Superstitions ‡.” ---- But by what Mark, I pray, do
 you distinguish betwixt *Rites* and *Fopperies*; betwixt
Ceremonies and *Superstitions*? The Consecrating of
 Ground in the Church of *England* is a Rite, but the Con-
 secrating of Water in the Church of *France* is a Foppery ---
 The Priest’s signing the baptised Infant with the Sign
 of the Cross, in Token that it shall confess a crucified
 Christ, is a significant Rite: But his putting his Finger
 into his Ear, in Token that it shall hear the Word of
 God; or Salt upon its Tongue, in Token that its Speech
 shall be season’d with Salt, are intollerable Fopperies.---
 The Bowings to the Altar, bowing at the Name of *Jesus*,
 Kneeling at the Communion, Sponsors, Surplice, Hoods,
 Lawn Sleeves, and every thing of this kind used in the
 Church of *England*, are edifying and decent Ceremonies,
 “ of clear Signification and indisputable Use §” But the
 Slippers and Staff, Knocking on the Breast, Elevations,
 Crossings, Gesticulations, Sprinklings with holy Water,
 &c. practised in the Church of *Rome*, are ridiculous
 Superstitions. ---- How happy to have Governors thus
 spiritually gifted; able to distinguish betwixt Things
 that differ!

“ My Suggestion, that by the meer Concessions of
 “ your XXth Article Thousands of Profelytes have
 “ been gain’d from you to the Church of *Rome*, is rash,
 “ you say, and groundless: Nor do you believe I can
 “ name *one* who was ever gain’d by it.”*---- I will
 give you two Instances almost equal to a thousand.
 The *first* shall be the renowned *Chillingworth*, who was
 gain’d to the Church of *Rome*, chiefly by this Argu-

‡ Def. p. 11. § P. 11. * Def. P. 15.

ment, viz. *The Necessity of an infallible living Judge of Controversies* † : Which is but a different Expression for the *Authority of the Church in Matters of Faith*. Now if this Argument was so plausible as to vanquish, and lead captive so great a Master of Reason, Multitudes of weaker Minds have, no doubt, fallen by its Force. The other shall be King *James II.*, of whom Bishop *Burnet* says, he gave me this Account of the *Change of his Religion*.-----“ All due Care was taken to form him
 “ to a strict Adherence to the Church : Amongst other
 “ Things much was said of the *AUTHORITY of the Church*,
 “ and of the Tradition from the Apostles in support of
 “ *Episcopacy*. So when he came to observe that
 “ there was more Reason to submit to the *Catholic*
 “ *Church*, than to one particular Church ; and that other
 “ Traditions might be taken on her Word, as well as
 “ *Episcopacy* was received among us, he tho’t the Step
 “ was not great, but that it was very reasonable to go
 “ over to the Church of *Rome* ‡.” See how dangerous a Weapon is this same *Church Authority* : And how capable of being used to the infinite Prejudice of the Protestant Cause !

“ But granting this Authority of the Church, (*i. e.*
 “ of its Pastors and Governors, its Bishops and Clergy)
 “ How, you ask, would our *Reformation* be overthrown
 “ by it ; which was not carried on in Opposition to
 “ Authority, but with the Concurrence of all the Au-
 “ thority in the Nation *?” Strange, Sir, you should so soon forget ! Did not I remember you that the *Reformation* under Queen *Elizabeth*, and the present Forms of Worship prescribed in the Common-Prayer, were strongly opposed by every Bishop in the Kingdom ; and the Convocation then sitting, were so far from having

 † Vid. *Life of Chillingworth*, p. 7. ‡ *Burnet’s History* of his own Times, Octav. Edit. Vol. I. p. 194. * Def. p. 15.

any hand in it, that they presented to the Parliament several Propositions in favour of *Popery*, directly contrary to the Proceedings of the Parliament? The *Civil Magistrate*, you affirm, *has no Power at all, nor Authority in these Matters.** They are the *Pastors* and *Governors* of the Church, in whom alone it is lodged. But behold, these *Pastors* and *Governors* were zealous for the old Religion! They argued, voted, petitioned strenuously for it, and against the *Reformation*. The *Reformation* then, upon your Principles, is built upon a wrong Bottom: Was carried on, not in Concurrence with, but in avow'd Opposition to, *all the Authority of the Nation*. How justly might I here return your own ungenerous Compliment, *It was great Rashness (too great in Conscience) if indeed it was not TREACHERY and PLAYING BOOTY, to set the Protestant Cause upon so sandy a Foundation.*** Your Principles, if digested into proper Form, will stand thus. -- "The Church hath Power
 " and Authority to decree Ceremonies and Rites: But
 " by *the Church*, observe, I understand, not the King
 " and Parliament, not the Civil Magistrate, who have
 " no Power at all relating to these Matters; but the
 " *Bishops* only and *Clergy*, who are appointed and called
 " of God to be its *Pastors* and *Governors*: But remember, my Countrymen, the Common-Prayer, and
 " Forms of Worship now established and used amongst
 " you, were introduced into this Church, not by *the*
 " *Authority*, no, nor yet by *the Consent* of the *Pastors*
 " and *Governors* whom God had set over it, but in
 " direct *Opposition* to them. It was a *Change* brought
 " about entirely by the *Civil Magistrate*, who had no
 " Authority to effect it. It was therefore really no
 " other than an ecclesiastical Rebellion, an unjustifiable
 " Revolt from the only rightful Rulers and Governors
 " of the Church in its spiritual Concerns."----

This, Sir, I apprehend, is the plain Tendency of

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your Principles ; though I know you have been so wise as to contradict them again, by allowing, “ *that if Church Governors will not come into such Reformation, as is according to GOD’s Word, but obstinately persevere in maintaining their sinful Errors and Corruptions, the People may reform themselves.* ” *---But this Concession overthrows your whole Scheme of Church Authority, makes *the People* the *supreme* and *ultimate* Judges, as to Points of Faith, and Rites of Worship ; brings down the Decrees of the most numerous and most holy Councils, Convocations, and Synods, to stand at the Bar of every Man’s private Judgment ; and vests him with Authority to receive or reject them, as to himself shall seem fit. So powerful is Truth, which will prevail !

But your Positions as to the *Civil Magistrate*, deserve a more distinct and accurate Consideration. “ He has no Power at all to decree Rites in divine Worship †--- “ This Power is not in the King and Parliament, for “ in this very Article (XX.) which, together with the “ rest, is confirmed by Act of Parliament (13 Eliz. c. “ 12.) and thereby made a Part of our ecclesiastical “ Constitution, they have plainly owned it to be in *the Church* ; and no body imagines, that by the Church “ they meant *themselves*. The King and Parliament “ then have plainly disowned any such Power in themselves, and have recognized it to be in the Church. ‡”--- This, Sir, is a Doctrine, which may be of dangerous and important Consequence, and I believe not founded in Truth. For,

I. As ’twas the *Queen* and *Parliament* alone, without, yea in Opposition to, the *Bishops* and *Convocation*, which decreed the present Form and Worship of your Church, and to their Authority alone it owes its very Being, Birth, and Support ; by affirming that they had *no Power nor Authority of this Nature*, you knock

* Def. p. 13. † Ibid. p. 18. ‡ Ibid. p. 17.

down and demolish, the *Church of England* at once, and lay it prostrate in the Dust. And,

2. That the King and Parliament by acknowledging this Power to be in *the Church*, have not *disclaimed* it, nor put it out of their own Hands, is incontestible hence, that they have at the same Time expressly told you, what they mean by *the Church*; not the Bishops and Clergy, but the *Congregation of the Faithful*; of which Congregation *themselves* are not only a Part, but the *principal* and *ruling* Part: And accordingly, our Laws and Constitution have vested the *supreme Power* of prescribing Ceremonies and Rites *only* in them. I ask you---By *what Authority* do the Rubricks of the Common Prayer, bind the Clergy to Obedience; or *whence* is it, they are obliged to observe the Rites and Forms prescribed in that Book?---Is it not *entirely* by the Authority and Act of *Parliament*? As for the Pastors and Governors to whom you *appropriate* this Authority, the Bishops and Clergy, they have no Power by our Constitution to make one single Law, to decree one Rite, nor to prescribe one Ceremony: When assembled in Convocation, they are absolutely under the Controul and Direction of the Civil Power. "Even the very Subjects of their Enquiry and Debate, as well as the Extent of their Ordinances in Point of Obligation, are prescribed by *Statute Law*, that they cannot so much as attempt any Canons or Constitutions, without a Royal Licence; and that none of their Ordinances are binding, even against the private Customs of a single Parish.*" How is it then you affirm, *the King and Parliament* to have *disowned* any such Power in themselves, and to have *recognized* it to be in *the Church*? But,

3. The Point is if possible, still rendered more clear from the XXXIVth Article above cited; which says, *If any Man through his private Judgment, openly breaks the*

* Examinat. of the Codex, p. 114.

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Ceremonies of the Church, ordained by COMMON AUTHORITY, be shall be openly rebuked, as one who offendeth against the common Order of the Church, and hurteth the AUTHORITY OF THE MAGISTRATE. ---- The *Authority of the Magistrate* then, is indisputably concerned in *ordaining* these Ceremonies: And your Church, Sir, however loath you are to hear it, is undoubtedly a *Parliamentary* and *Civil* Constitution; made, formed, supported entirely by the Civil Magistrate, and by him alone it is capable of being thrown into a new Form.

But you ask, “Are not the Dissenting Churches in “the same Sense *Parliamentary*? Do they not depend “entirely upon an Act of Parliament, the Act of Toleration.†” No; the Dissenting Churches were formed, subsisted, and grew *without* and *before*, any Parliamentary Authority. We are thankful to the excellent and good Government under which we live, for the Act of Toleration. But would humbly beg Leave to say, we derive not our Power to assemble for divine Worship, nor our Ministers theirs to officiate in such Assemblies, from any human Law, but from our *natural Right* as Men, and from the Authority of CHRIST. The Act of Toleration only protects us in the Enjoyment of this Right.

“But above all Things you marvel, that whilst I “was making this Push at the Church of *England*, I “did not reflect how much *I laid my self open*: For if “there was ever upon Earth a Church, which could properly be called *Parliamentary*, it was the *Presbyterian* “in the Time of the *grand Rebellion*. §” What you call the *grand Rebellion*, Sir, a *British* HOUSE OF COMMONS, since the Restoration, call a *Vindication of their JUST LIBERTIES*; and brought one of their Members, *Lenthal*, upon his Knees at the Bar, and there sharply reprimanded him, for presuming to reflect upon it in the

† Def. p. 21. § Ibid. p. 10.

Manner you have done.* Besides, if it was a *grand Rebellion*, the Shame and Reproach of it falls chiefly upon the Church of *England*; the Parliament who began it, consisting almost entirely of Members of that Communion, as Lord *Clarendon* himself owns. But, what if the *Presbyterial* Church established afterward by them was truly *Parliamentary*, how have I laid my self open! Had I said or suggested any Thing at all relating to *that Church*, or the Proceedings of *those Times*? Not a single Word; but for ought I had said, it appears not but I as much condemn that *Establishment* as your self. How then have I laid myself open! Are you, Sir, the Gentleman that reproves me for *Ramblings*?

You put the Case §, “ that any of our Dissenting Churches, or the Church of *Scotland*, should by an Act of the general Assembly ordain, that a decent Basin, with clean Water should be provided, and placed near the Pulpit, that so the Minister taking the Child in his Arms, may conveniently pour or sprinkle Water upon its Face, in the Name of the Father, &c. Here are several Rites ordained, which Christ in his Wisdom did not think proper to ordain, and one of them at least as exceptionable as any excepted against in our Church, *Sprinkling*---- What will this Gentleman say to such an Appointment?” I will say, Sir, that if Compliance with this Injunction be made a *necessary Term* of receiving Baptism in that Church (as the *Cross* and *Sponsors* are made necessary in yours) so as that no Child shall be baptized that is not *sprinkled* from such Basin; and the Parent that desires to have his Child dipt (believing *that* to be the only Way in which Christian Baptism ought to be administered) shall not have it done; in that Case, Sir, I will say the Church acts a tyrannical, unjust, schismatical Part; and if I could have my Child baptised in any

* Journal of the 12th of May 1660. § Def. p. 23, 24.
other

other Church, constituted upon a more *Catholic and Scriptural* Plan, I should think it my Duty to apply to it on that Occasion. The Spirit of Ceremony-making and Church Tyranny, is of a restless and incroaching Nature, and ought *timely* to be crushed. 'Twas from such *little Beginnings*, the Mass of *Romish* Fopperies grew up to its present Heighth.

“ The *natural Rights* you represent some of our Fellow-subjects as submitting to be deprived of by disqualifying Laws, without going about to *turn the World upside down for their Repeal*,” * are vastly too *trivial*, to be compared with those of which Dissenters are deprived; nor are they disqualified as to these, upon the Account of *Conscience and Religion* (the hard Case of Dissenters) for acting as we think the Authority and Laws of God indispensibly oblige us: Nor finally, can the Person you mention, perhaps be properly said to have a *natural Right*, to sustain at the same Time two different Characters, and to execute two Offices which are generally inconsistent and interfere with each other---So the Cases are not parallel. Besides, why, Sir, are we represented as *turning the World upside down*? Have we ever kindled Tumults, raised Mobs, demolished Houses, threatened Courts---under a seditious Cry, that our *Churches were in Danger*? We appeal to the impartial World, for the Loyalty and Peaceableness with which we behave.

You pass over, by your own Confession, *almost half my Pamphlet* † unremarked; in which the Constitution of the Church of *England* is compared with that of the Church of *CHRIST*, and they are shewn to be *Societies* of a quite different Nature; so as that a Person's Separation from the one, does by no Means imply his Separation from the other. Your replying nothing to this you will give me Leave to impute to some other Cause,

* Def. p. 6, 7. † Ibid. p. 37.

than “ *your not observing any Thing in it, which pretends to refute or contradict any Position advanced in your Letter.*” Is not the Charge of *Schism* your favourite and constant Topic ? But if I prove the *two Societies* so entirely different in their Constitution and Frame, as that my not communicating in the former does in no wise break me off from, nor in the least interrupt my Communication in the latter, is not this a *Refutation* of one of the chief and most interesting Parts of your Letters ? And did not Justice to your Argument demand, if you could have given it, a proper Reply ?

“ ’Tis growing mighty modish, you complain, with our People to laugh at all Notions of Church Communion, and to make nothing of the most unnecessary Separations.” * Yes, I thank God, the loud Peals you were wont to ring us upon the Head of *Schism*, are generally treated with pretty much Neglect, not only amongst our People, but even amongst your own. For when one sees grave Gentlemen setting themselves up for *Rulers and Governors* in the Name of the Lord, claiming Power to forgive Sins, to decree Ceremonies, to make Laws, and to determine Points of Faith ; and then thundering out their Anathemas, upon such as refuse to submit to their Authority --- What must this provoke in all sensible Spectators, but a Mixture of Contempt, Indignation, and Mirth ?

Can these *spiritual Fathers* in their Consciences, believe our *SCHISM* to be so horrid and so damning, and yet refuse to drop the Ceremonies which they see to be the *Stone of Stumbling*, at which we so grievously and wickedly fall ? What, for the Sake of a few Things which they own to be *indifferent*, will they harden themselves against the Cries of so many perishing misguided *Christians*, and destroy the Souls for which Christ died ! Forgive me, Sir, if I cannot think it ; but that *Schism*

* Def. p. 25.

is only used as an *ecclesiastical Scarecrow*, to keep the Simple in Awe, and to establish a sacerdotal Empire over ductile and weak Minds.

“ All Christians, you affirm, living within the Church of *England*, which is co-extended, with the Kingdom, may be truly said to owe it Obedience and Submission, and are *de Jure*, whether they will be or not *de Facto*, true Members and Subjects of it *.” But pray tell me: Is not the *Church of Scotland* equally co-extended with *that* Kingdom, as the *Church of England* is with *this*? And do not all who live within its Pale, owe it like Submission? Is not the *Presbyterian* Discipline and Worship as much established there, as the *Episcopal* is here? If it be *Schism* then, and a grievous Sin for Dissenters to withdraw from the established Church in *South-Britain*, is it not *alike* schismatical and wicked in your *Episcopal* Brethren to withdraw from the *Presbyterian* Church established in *the North*? Whence is it we never hear from you any solemn Admonitions to your Brethren beyond the *Tweed*, of the detestable Sin of *Schism*; warning them of its damning Nature, and exhorting them speedily to unite with the established Church! Here your grave Lectures may possibly have good Effect; and if you really thought *Schism* so grievous an Offence as you affect to represent, 'tis strange you never try the Power of your Persuasions with your Brethren in the *North*. This would be a noble Proof that you were in earnest, and sincere. But whilst, amidst your warmest Harangues against the *English* Separation, you encourage and Support the Dissent from the *Scottish* Church; what can be thought of your Outeries about *Schism*, but that they deserve a Name more severe than I am willing here to give?

Your Notion of our being “ true Members of the “ Church of *England de Jure*, tho' we are not, and

* Def. p. 29.

“ will not be *de Facto*” ---- is to me quite new, and surpasses my Comprehension. I thought it enter’d essentially into the Idea of a Church, that it is a Society of VOLUNTIERS: A Company join’d together in certain Acts and Professions by common CONSENT.” And that without, much less against, his own Agreement and Consent, no Man could with any Truth be stiled a Member of any Church. All Persons living in Christendom may be said to owe *Jesus Christ* Obedience and Submission, with infinitely greater Reason than all the People of *England* can be said to owe it to the Church; but does it therefore follow, that they are all *de Jure*, if they will not be *de Facto*, TRUE Members of the Church of *Christ*? What, those who openly renounce *Christ*, declare him to be an Imposter, and utterly disavow Obedience and Subjection to him, can such, with any Truth or Propriety, be stiled true Members of his Church! Strange Divinity indeed! *Christ’s Church* then, instead of a Congregation of faithful Persons, may now be defined a Society of impious Blasphemers, of Infidels and prophane Persons, who neither fear God, nor believe in *Jesus Christ*; these all may be declared and treated as true Members of his Church. If this indeed be right, then with some Pretence it may be said, that those who openly renounce and disclaim the Church of *England*, and declare they will not live in any Subjection to it, may yet be consider’d as true Members of it.

I owe Allegiance to the *King of England*, because I receive Protection from him, and enjoy innumerable civil Blessings by means of his Government, under which I Consent to live. But it does not hence follow, that I owe Subjection to the *Church of England*, (as you argue, pag. 29.) from whom I receive no Protection, enjoy no Benefit nor Advantage, and in Communion with which I by no means consent to live. CONSENT, Sir, is indispensibly and essentially necessary to form the Relation betwixt Pastors and People: And without this

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Consent no Church in any Christian or scriptural Sense can possibly be formed. *Dissenters* therefore, can with no Justness nor Propriety in the World, be stiled *true Members* of your Church. Your solemn Excommunications of them is really a Casting such out, as never were in it: So the Miracle still remains.

As to our *Posture* of receiving the Lord's Supper, instead of ingenuously owning your great *Misrepresentation*, you seek by frivolous and quaint Questions to raise a Dust to conceal it. As, "what meaneth this *Infor-*
mant, by *some* of their Churches, which have admitted kneeling? What by *some* in their Churches?
 "If there were any considerable Number, &c." *
 Their *Number*, give me leave to tell you, Sir, is nothing to the Purpose. 'Tis the LIBERTY they have to do it, is the only Point in Debate. If *all* have this *Liberty*. tho' not one in five Thousand should actually use it; my Point stands firm, yours is overthrown; and you stand convicted before the World having given a very wrong and injurious Account of us. You rashly asserted that *Kneeling* among us was NEVER allowed to be departed from; that our *Ministers* INSISTED upon, and REFUSED to abate it.
 ----This, from my own certain Knowledge, from the Information of others, from *Baxter's* reform'd Liturgy, I proved to be a false Representation. In the second Edition of my Letter, (pag. 21.) I added a Passage from Dr. *Calamy's* brief Account to the German Divines, which expressly says, "The Communicants amongst PROTESTANT DISSENTERS are AT LIBERTY to use their OWN POSTURE in the Time of Receiving; tho' a Table Posture is most commonly used. Note, To this brief Account, &c. you appear to have been no Stranger; you had, doubtless, read it; for you quote a long Passage from it (Lett. II. p. 62.) not four Lines distant from that I have now cited. How then could you take upon you

* Def. p. 32.

so roundly to affirm... *that it is NEVER ALLOWED to be departed from, &c.* When you had seen it declared to the World that our *Communicants were AT LIBERTY to use their OWN POSTURE !*

But if this deserves an ingenuous Blush, I am called upon to blush with you, " For having said that Christ " and his Apostles, without all Peradventure, *sat around " the Table*, when every Body knows, who knows any " Thing at all, that they used the recumbent Posture, " which is no more Sitting than it is Kneeling .†"--- If my Assertion cannot be supported by indisputable Authority, I have a Blush at your Command, Sir. Let my Vouchers be heard. St. Matthew * says, *he SAT DOWN with the Twelve--- And as they were eating, JESUS took Bread and blessed it.* St. Mark §, *As they SAT and did eat, JESUS took Bread, &c.* St. Luke ‡, *When the Hour was come, he SAT DOWN, and the twelve Apostles with him : And he took the Bread and gave Thanks.* If I am now to be corrected for representing Christ and his Apostles as *SITTING around the Table*, the Weight of the Stroke will fall entirely upon *the Scriptures* ; under which Patronage I am safe. I make no Manner of Doubt, Sir, but the Posture was *sitting*, though with the Body, perhaps, a little *leaning or reclin'd*. Nor would our Language afford our Translators any better, or indeed any other, Word than *sitting* to express it by. Pray, how would you render it---*As they RECUMB'D and did eat---And when the Hour was come, he RECUMB'D with his twelve Apostles ?* If every Body, " *who knows any Thing at all, knows they used the recumbent Posture,*" then good Mr. Henry knew nothing at all ; for, he says, " He sat down in the usual Table-Gesture ; not lying " on one Side, for it was not *easy* to eat, nor *possible* to " drink in that Posture, but sitting upright, tho' perhaps, sitting low : " Or rather, as Dr. Lightfoot tells

† Def. p. 31. * xxvi. 20. § xiv. 18. ‡ xxii. 14.

us, the Posture was, sitting on a Couch, leaning the left Elbow on the Table.

My Account of the Constitution of the Church of *England*, of the regal Supremacy, and of the Proceedings of the Convocation in the Affair of Mr. *Whiston*, you call *Misrepresentations* ‡; but I observe you are so prudent as not to offer a single Word in Proof of their being such.

Your representing me as having a great Zeal for *Arianism*, and being fond of these new Notions ††, for which I had given not the least real Occasion, is an Artifice so low, that you must give me Leave to look down with great Pity upon it; not doubting but I have an Advocate and an Avenger in your Breast.

There is something truly extraordinary in your affirming---“ That the *damnatory Clauses* of the *Athanasian Creed* may be as safely subscribed, without any “ explanatory Declaration, as the *holy Scriptures*; at “ least such Passages, as *He that believeth not shall be “ damned.... He that believeth not the Son, shall not see “ Life, but the Wrath of GOD abideth on him ‡‡, &c.* ” As much as to say, You may as confidently assent to the Decisions of a weak and fallible *Man*, concerning the *everlasting State* of Multitudes of his Fellow-Men, as to the Decision of the omniscient and infallible God. Or thus, because God hath fixed *some* Terms for a Man's Entrance into Life, therefore *Man* may take upon him to devise and fix *others*. Or thus, because CHRIST had Authority to pronounce, that no Man who received not *the Gospel*, which he preached, should finally be saved, therefore *Athanasius* (if he was its Compiler) had Authority to pronounce, that no Man who believed not *the Creed* which he had made, should attain eternal Life, but should *everlastingly perish*. Are these Conclusions just ?

† Def. p. 37, 38. †† P. 38, 44. ‡‡ Def. p. 40.

I cannot think myself to need your Forgiveness, Sir, for asking, " Whether you were amongst the weak
 " and uncharitable Minds, who damn to the Pit of Hell,
 " all who cannot receive all the dark and mysterious
 " Points set forth in the *Athanasian Creed*." For does not that Creed most *peremptorily* pronounce this Damnation on all such ? Are not you a zealous Advocate and Admirer of that Creed ? Do you not *yourself* thirteen Times a Year, in the Presence and Church of God, and as his Minister and Ambassador, declare solemnly to the People, *That whoever does not keep whole and UNDEFILED the Faith therein delivered, he shall WITHOUT DOUBT perish everlastingly* ? Where then is the Wrong of my asking, *Whether you are amongst the uncharitable Persons ? &c.* For if you are *sincere* in its Use, and do really believe what you solemnly tell the People, when you read to them *that Creed*, I cannot see but you must be content to be reckoned in that Number. For how to reconcile a solemn Declaration concerning certain Persons, that *WITHOUT DOUBT they perish everlastingly*, with Hopes of their Salvation, is to me quite incomprehensible.

The Subscriptions of our Ministers, with the Protestation they made against the *damnatory Clauses*, can with no Truth, I apprehend, be called " a *Protestatio contra Factum*, nor a subscribing Assent to the Truth of certain Propositions, at the same Time declaring they do not assent to it.†" For it really amounted to no more than this.... " I believe the Articles of this Creed, and think it agreeable to the Word of God, but I here publicly declare, I do not consider the *damnatory Clauses* as any Part of the Creed, nor give my Assent to them. " As for the Subscription of our present Ministers, if it be not done under a Claim of the Benefit of this Protestation made by their Predecessors, or with some such Protestation made by themselves ; I freely own, Sir, I cannot jus-

.....
 † Def. p. 41.

tify it, and think it a Thing which ought not to be done.

SUBSCRIPTION to human Creeds have, I apprehend, been of infinite Disservice and Hurt to the Christian Church, have rent it into a Variety of Sects and angry Parties, and filled it with innumerable Strifes and Debates : They *are a Fence* raised around the Church, which can possibly keep none but *virtuous* and *honest* Persons, but never can keep one *Hypocrite*, one *Heretick*, or *wicked Man*, from entering into it. I wish the Case you mention may not be extremely common, *viz. Fraudulent and insincere Subscriptions, and the constant Use of Forms, which they who use them do not approve of, whereby the Conscience is defiled.* *

But the Point of Subscriptions which is the Subject of your *Appendix*, will be considered by an *abler Hand* ; who will give you, I hope, ample Satisfaction on this Head : To his Instructions I commend you, Sir, wishing you with great Sincerity, abundant Peace and Truth.

* Def. p. 44.

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